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# DEDICATION.

TO THE

*RIGHT HONOURABLE*

THE

## COUNTESS CRAVEN.

MADAM,

In acknowledging the permission with which you have honoured me, to dedicate this inconsiderable work to your Ladyship, I am not without some apprehensions that my want of ability may render me unequal to the fulfilment of a task, which should be commensurate

mensurate with that pure dignity that has deigned to protect it.

This consideration might be essentially injurious to my endeavours, were I not sustained in hope, by the conviction, that the kindness of your Ladyship's disposition, will impel you to accept the intentions of desire, for the imperfections of the fact; and, that while I shelter my insignificance under the protecting sanction of your Ladyship's name, you will not deem me presumptuous, when I make a proud avowal of the envied distinction.

Unskilled as I am in the adulatory language of dedications, I should the more poignantly feel my inability to express my warm sense of your Lady-

ship's

ship's goodness, did I not know that the virtues which distinguish your character, and give additional lustre to your rank, would reject at once the meed of flattery, even from pens infinitely better qualified for such an employment than mine. The consciousness of being actuated by the genuine impulse of truth, encourages me, however, to observe, that I do not know where a summary result of all the moral qualities—an association of civility with good sense, generosity with honour, enriched by delicacy, and accompanied by an affability the most dignified and correct, can be found more apparently impressive, than in your Ladyship's language and demeanour; which enforces

forces and combines, from an admiring world, the assent of the heart, to the exterior forms of homage.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

MADAM,

Your Ladyship's obliged,

grateful, and

obedient Servant,

*R. Sickelmore.*

# OSRICK.

### *PARENTAL FEARS.*

"WELL, Peter, did you find Mr. Grange at home?"

"I did, Sir; and he bade me tell you that he had not seen my young master since he last parted with him at your house."

"You gave him my letter?"

"I did, Sir."

"And the answer——"

"Is what I have related; for Mr.

Grange has the gout so severely in his hands, that he cannot hold a pen; and, therefore, he could not return a written reply to the letter I gave him."

"Is my good friend, indeed, so very bad, Peter?"

"He is indeed, Sir; and it is the opinion of the family, that, unless he gets better advice than what Doctor Puffarden affords him, it will be some time ere he is otherwise."

"The thing's likely, Peter—But Osrick—he has seen nothing of Osrick?"

"Nothing since he last visited you, he bade me assure you."

"'Tis very strange! I begin to be very seriously uneasy! What can have become of him?—But put your horse in the stable, Peter, and then let me see you again."

Peter did as he was ordered; and, soon after, followed his master into the house.

*MR. SOMERTON*

was a gentleman in easy circumstances, residing principally on an estate of his own, in one of the most southern parts of the county of Sussex. He had been a widower some years; but, about ten months previous to the present epoch, he had again paid a visit to the Hymeneal temple, with the daughter of one of his tenants, not more than twenty years of age, though he himself had nearly numbered sixty summers.

A son, by his former wife, was his only child, who was nearly four years older than his youthful stepmother, had been well educated, possessed a fine figure, and a heart that would not have disgraced the breast of an emperor, as it was ever sensible to the touch of human sorrow, and palpitated with pleasure when instrumental in alleviating the miseries of the unfortunate.

His father had designed him for the law; but the repugnance he had manifested for sedentary paper and parchment pursuits, had induced him to comply with his desire, and purchase him a commission in the army; in which, in a regiment of infantry, at this time, he had been engaged nearly two years.

His regiment being stationed within ten miles of the coast, Lieutenant Somerton had obtained permission to pass a few weeks with his father at Somerton Lodge, where he had not been more than ten days, when his sudden disappearance occasioned the old gentleman to dispatch his servant to Mr. Grange, who resided about three miles from the Lodge, in a little pleasant village, and with whom they had both been for many years acquainted, in the hope of gaining some intelligence of him.

The return of the servant did not operate to subdue the old gentleman's uneasiness. Osrick, the Lieutenant's name, had been

been missing nearly four-and-twenty hours; and the probability that he had returned to his regiment, without taking leave of him, his father was well satisfied could not exist.

Peter having conducted his horse to the stable, again appeared before his master, when a multitude of enquiries, similar to those already noticed, were made of him, which produced similar answers, and gave the old gentleman no manner of relief.

"It is very odd, Peter," said he, "that no one can tell where the boy is gone to!"

"Very odd, indeed, Sir," replied Peter; "but it is not more odd than true. It was about this time yesterday, I think, that the Lieutenant left us."

"And have you no knowledge of the road he took?"

"None, Sir—the night, however, was very dark, and the cliffs, you know, are steep and dangerous—"

"Silence, blockhead! you awaken

fears in me, to which I was a stranger before.—Saddle your horse again instantly, and attend me at the gate."

Peter was about to obey the order, when a loud rap at the outer door, such as, he thought, the Lieutenant was in the habit of giving, suspended his intention.

Peter was not deceived—It was

*THE LIEUTENANT*

himself, who was soon after in the embrace of his father.

"My dear boy," said the affectionate old gentleman, "where have you been? Had you continued absent but a moment longer, Peter certainly would have dislocated your neck, by tumbling you headlong over one of the Sussex cliffs. You have made me very uneasy, I promise you."

"Believe me, dear Sir," said Osrick, "when I tell you, that I would not voluntarily give you one pang on my account

count for the universe. I have had full employment since I parted with you, and feel no reluctance to state the particulars of what has happened, which, should I unfortunately have incurred it, will, I am sure, release me from the effects of your displeasure."

The truth was, that Osrick had set out on foot, rather late in the day, to pay a visit to Mr. Grange. The weather was mild and pleasant. It was April. Of the three miles he had to walk, he had scarcely conquered half, when he found himself in the midst of

*A GANG OF SMUGGLERS,*

who were awaiting the approach of a boat, laden with contraband effects, just at that time seen making for the shore. The smugglers, consequently, took the liberty of detaining him, for their own security, until their goods were disposed of accord-

ing to their wishes—a circumstance in nowise uncommon on the Sussex coast.

Osrick in vain remonstrated with them, and assured them that from him they had nought to fear. They were inflexible. Resistance to their will would have been the height of folly, as it would have subjected him to that severity of treatment, by a peaceful demeanour only to be avoided.

Day-light had appeared some time ere the smugglers had concluded their business, and Osrick was permitted to depart.

Pondering upon the adventure of the night, the Lieutenant was shaping his course homeward, when

*A DISTRESSED FEMALE,*

decently attired, but languid and sorrowful, seated on the rise to the right of the road, arrested his attention. The poor girl

girl appeared in great anguish. Her pallid face was moistened with tears, which continued unremittingly to trickle down her cheeks, while her eyes, as in supplication to the Deity, were raised on high.

The Lieutenant halted, and gazed on her emaciated form for some time in silence. She was not an uninteresting object. She did not appear more than nineteen; and though her form was faded, she yet was lovely, with that indescribable something about her, which indicates a depressed individual to have known better days.

Osrick felt himself deeply affected. Not a symptom did her appearance exhibit that her wretchedness had been occasioned by the dissipation of vice. Her countenance displayed none of those bold marks gendered by infamy, and permanently established in the human contour by the repetition of excesses, which destroy the heavenly beauties of the structure, and pervert the mind. Her eyes, though

dimmed by misfortune, seemed irradiated with devotion, which shone through her tears, as they were raised in silent supplication to the throne of nature's God. The *tout ensemble* of the face would not have been unworthy of the divine pencil of Raphael; and the richness of expression which it so finely, and, at the same time, so delicately, possessed, gave vibration to those sensitive fibres of the Lieutenant's heart, with which it was so feelingly surrounded.

He approached the woe-worn object, and, in the mildest tones of pity, pronounced—

"So young, and yet so unfortunate!"

An anguished sigh escaped her, as her eyes now turned towards him. She seemed somewhat agitated by his presence, and made an effort to rise, but was too enfeebled to stand without assistance. She resumed her former position.

"Be not alarmed, my good girl," said the Lieutenant, striving to convey

a yet

a yet more pitying softness to his words. "I would alleviate your distress, did I know the means; not increase the wounds of one whom sorrow seems already to have so deeply lacerated."

"Alas!" she tremblingly replied, "when Heaven created man, it designed him not surely to oppress the weak—to distribute calamities for gain, and shade the sunshine of industry with the iniquity of avarice, and the cruel depravity of a merciless heart!"

"Of what, and of whom are you speaking?" said Osrick—"Who would oppress the weak?—Grief is too sacred for human sport, and fiends only, not men, indulge in so damning a practice."

"Calamity," she continued, "is long lived—it will crack the heart-strings ere it leaves you, and the virtuous poor may close their eyes, and pine in private. I once was joyful—but that's past! My parents smiled at my approach, and blessed

their God, that I was sent to gild their days with bliss, and make them happy. They died—but not of grief, as I shall do.—Famine and disease did much for them—they are now in Heaven, and have left a world of sorrow for me to move in. But that God who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' I beseech not to desert me in my afflictions!"

Osrick felt a tear trembling in his eye—the thread of pity which ran through his whole system, was so forcibly struck, that its vibrations pained him to the soul. The agitation of his mind suspended words, and he turned his head aside, and wept.

His emotions were not strictly observed by the cause of them; for she too, more affected, raised a handkerchief to her eyes, which she steeped in her tears.

"Can I serve you?" at length stammered the Lieutenant, "tell me, can I serve you? Advert not to misfortunes past, but tell me of the remedy which should

should be administered, to remove those ills which you at present endure?"

"Poverty—famine—death!" she energetically exclaimed, "death in the most horrible and ghastly shape—death inflicted by the avarice and depravity of one who would fain be distinguished as a guardian of health: What remedy can be found for such afflictions?—What administration assuage the anguish that rages in my soul?—Mortal efforts must be ineffectual—God only can ease my sufferings, and bid my sorrows sleep."

The meekness of resignant piety, which, when Osrick first beheld her, had distinguished her countenance, was distorted by despair, as the preceding part of her expressions issued from her lips. It gradually, however, wore away towards the conclusion, until the swoln lineaments of deep and devout melancholy only could be perceived.

"Will you accept of my services?" tremulously

tremulously urged the Lieutenant. "The sympathetic powers which you have wakened within me, forbid me to leave you under the pressure of such acute distress, as you seem vainly struggling to overcome. Be of good heart: God punisheth but to heal, and will ultimately restore peace to the troubled mind that despaireth not of his goodness. Suffer me then, as the instrument of Divine beneficence, to forbid your tears to flow, and to assuage that corroding grief which preys upon your heart, and destroys the fortitude of the christian. I would, indeed I would, already have advised something to tranquillize your spirits, but that your incoherent expressions I understand not!"

"It may be so," replied the poor girl; "they are, however, but too well understood here," placing her hand on her bosom as she spoke. "The discord of woe here," she continued, "so fatally predominates,

predominates, that the icy touch of death only can cure the burning anguish I endure, and give me ease."

Like the dew on withered lilies, collected into globules by the renovating influence of the sun, her tears continued to chase each other down her face, as the humane Lieutenant strove to compose her, and bid her sorrows cease. He, at length, so far succeeded, that she told him her name was

*ANNETTE,*

and that, if he possessed the christian intrepidity to enter the house of mourning and misery, she would accept of his support to her residence, not many paces from the spot on which he stood; to which the Lieutenant unhesitatingly consented.

In this humane act Osrick was engaged, when Doctor Puffarden passed them. The placid effects which the Lieutenant's words had wrought on the fair invalid, in an instant

instant were overcome by the Doctor's appearance!—With a convulsed scream she sunk again to earth, hiding her face with her hands, apparently that her sight might not wander to an object so offensive.

"You are an early riser, Lieutenant," said the Doctor, as he passed. "I shall do myself the pleasure of paying a visit to Somerton Lodge very shortly, when I hope to find you at home. My compliments to your father—good morning."

The Doctor was gone in an instant. He scarcely bestowed a glance upon the unhappy trembling girl. To notice the unfortunate made no part of his practice.—The Lieutenant answered his salute with a slight inclination of the head only. He had known the Doctor long, and was sorry that his general conduct had put it entirely out of his power to respect him. Osrick again endeavoured to speak words of comfort to the afflicted Annette.

"I will, I will be composed," said she.

"But

"But—forgive these tears—in the pityless mortal that passed, you beheld the author of all my grief—God forgive him, as I will endeavour to do—Oh! merciful Father, strike his heart with remorse, that repentance, early and effectual, may overtake him, ere his nerves lose their energies, and the gloom of death envelopes him. Gracious Heaven! hear the prayer of a suppliant for an enemy!"

Again the Lieutenant gently raised her from the earth. He conceived it not prudent to interrogate her regarding the Doctor at that time, but tenderly to urge her removal, and to support her home.

"Cheerly, cheerly, Annette," said he; "the best of us are subject to afflictions. The Almighty, doubt not, but punisheth to purify our souls for Heaven. Our sufferings at most here, can be but short lived; but our reward, if we bear them with pious resignation, will be eternal. God is good and merciful. To despair of his support is sinful. It is our duty

duty to meet the chastening rod with christian strength, and religious resolution. Our eternal welfare should occupy our thoughts when the body suffers; and our thanks should be offered up to the throne of grace, that our trials here are bestowed for our lasting benefit hereafter. Guide reflection to its proper channel, and mental ease must follow. Come, come, cheerly, cheerly; that Being who feeds the ravens in the desert, and to reptiles the most inert and helpless, giveth the means of supporting life, will not desert those who think of him in their calamities, and entreat the divinity of his aid. Happy are those who can look into futurity, with the hope which conscious rectitude bestows. Death for them has no terrors. The ills of life, they know, are but transitory; but the celestial bliss which must succeed, they feel, will last for ever!"

In this manner did the Lieutenant raise the spirits of the drooping girl, until they

they reached her residence together. It was a low thatched habitation. Poverty could not have selected one more humble for disappointed industry to breathe in. The tears of Annette, as they reached the door, began more copiously to flow; and the little fortitude which the Lieutenant's words had inspired, to leave her as they entered this

*ABODE OF SORROW.*

The little room which first presented itself, was almost destitute of every article of furniture. Its impoverished aspect diffused a chill through the mind of the beholder. The gloom was heightened by the silence which prevailed. It scarcely seemed the habitation of a human being. Osrick gazed on Annette. Her cheeks had assumed a more livid hue. She could not speak, but pointed to a door, which stood half open, at the opposite end of the room. The Lieutenant moved towards it,

it. He pressed it gently back, and beheld

*A PICTURE OF HUMAN MISERY,*

which shocked him to the soul.

On a pallet of straw, barely concealed by a covering of the coarsest description, lay the bodies of two persons, who, apparently, had but recently breathed their last.

Kneeling by one side of the bed, in a paroxysm of grief, was a female of very advanced age. Her grey hairs fell in disorder over her wrinkled brow; while, with her elbows on the bed, she supported her aching head in her hands. A more perfect model of despair never gave birth to sympathy, or agitated a beholder.

The Lieutenant's approach

*THE AGED MATRON*

noticed not, until an exclamation of horror

horror which escaped him, awoke her attention. Her eyes, sunk with years, and dimmed by infirmity, were now turned towards him. Her position continued the same, but that her head was somewhat more raised, as she pronounced—

"Annette—Oh! my child, my child!"

It was evident that her sight was too far gone to distinguish the Lieutenant, who was too affected at the instant to undeceive her.

"Oh! my poor heart-broken Annette," tremulously continued the matron, "I cannot now console thee. That Heaven will bless and save thee, is my only hope. O, man! man! how will thy iniquities be answered, when the last trump shall sound, and thy trembling soul awaits the fiat of the Almighty!"

The Lieutenant, not doubting but she alluded to the person whom she imagined had been instrumental to, if not the sole cause of, her present sufferings, found himself incapable of offering her any relief.

lief; his feelings were too poignant. He essayed at words, but they were denied to him. Cut to the heart, he retreated from the woe-fraught scene, and once more gazed on the luckless Annette. The disconsolate girl had sunk on a worm-eaten form, for chairs the place afforded not, and seemed, but that her tears evinced the contrary, to have lost the acumen of recollection, in the apathy of despair.

At this juncture, another female, of the tribe of penury, entered the cot. Sorrow was also deeply imprinted on her features; but enough of health remained to enable her to offer assistance to such as were too enfeebled to support themselves. On discovering the Lieutenant, she seemed surprised, and would have withdrawn, had not he solicited her stay. Her presence, by slightly detaching his thoughts from other objects, restored Osrick to some moderate degree of composure. He therefore begged of her not to retire, but

to inform him of the nature of the distress of the family, and how he might administer to their relief.

The woman, after some little hesitation, and overcoming the confusion which the sight of him had at first created, gave the Lieutenant a summary account of their misfortunes, to the following effect:—

"Those who lie dead in the adjoining room," she said, "are the parents of Annette; and the elderly female, who so deeply laments their loss, is her grandmother, the parent of her father.

"Their name," she continued, "is

*LATOUR.*

They were poor, but industry kept them above want, until they became incapable of employment. Annette, from her infancy, had been educated and supported by a lady of fortune, until the death of her benefactress compelled her to return to her friends. Her presence, however, much

much contributed to the happiness of her relatives; and her performance of fine needle-work, for the neighbouring gentry, increased the modicum they enjoyed. About six months since, her father, by an accident, so sadly lacerated one of his legs, that he could not work. Annette, a good girl, could not coin money—though she nearly starved herself, to support him and her heart-broken mother. Their little property they continued gradually to dispose of, as their necessities required; and all lived in the hope that Latour would soon get better, and that their calamities would, in a great measure, cease. But that was not to be the case. The wound that he had so unfortunately received, at length began to get so much worse, that Annette thought it right that one of the faculty should be applied to, a circumstance which her father would not before permit; and Doctor Puffarden was accordingly sent for. The Doctor had attended Latour but a few days, when he

he said, that nothing but the amputation of the limb could preserve the life of his patient. The operation, therefore, was performed; which done, five guineas, as his fee, by Puffarden, were demanded. The long confinement of Latour had rendered him almost penny less, and he made his condition known to the Doctor, with a promise of satisfying every demand he might have on him, as he grew better, and could exert himself among his friends. The Doctor smiled at his distress, and left him with reproaches, and a threat of never visiting him again. On the same evening, from the unskilful manner in which the operation had been performed, the wound began to bleed afresh, and Doctor Puffarden was again applied to; but he refused to attend, and many hours elapsed ere a surgeon could be procured. In short, Latour bled to death! and, to heighten the distress of those he left behind him, it has been ascertained, that the state of his wounded limb required

not the dreadful operation, which has had such a fatal termination. Latour died two days ago; and his widow, of a fever brought on by grief and fatigue, expired this morning. Annette has been wild with grief ever since, and Heaven only knows what, in the end, will become of her."

"She shall never want a friend," exclaimed the Lieutenant, wiping the beads of humanity from his eyes, "while Osrick Somerton can command a guinea. Good woman," said he, "await you here until I return. You shall not be a loser by your obedience."

The Lieutenant now precipitately left the house; and, instead of immediately hastening home, turned into the town, to procure a respectable asylum for Annette.

When once the mind is resolved upon the performance of a generous act, neither labour or difficulties are regarded. The motive is a stimulus divine, that keeps

keeps the energies of the man alive; and the completion of his design is a reward which sweetens recollection, and gives a sensation to the individual, such as the flinty-hearted reptiles, the torture and bane of society, never can enjoy. He who feels the approbation of that inward monitor, which no one is without, feels a heaven in himself. His soul seems exalted; and the all-seeing eye of the Omniscient regards him with approof.

*VICE,*

though concealed from the knowledge of the world, preys upon the heart in which it generates; gives a hell of remorse, that burns incessantly within it; and keeps in activity that most oppressive and degrading of all human scourges, an abhorrence of one's self.

*VIRTUE*

may indeed be said to carry its own reward, and vice its own punishment. No man, let his sophistry on others do what it may, can deceive himself. Guilt will produce the feel of guilt, and torture everlastingly; while goodness raises the grateful thoughts of the mortal to futurity and his God.

Osrick, though pained by the galling scene he had just witnessed, felt that approbatory sensation, which a motive and an act benign bestow. He blessed Heaven that he had been so afflicted, that his compensation should be what it was; that he might enjoy that feast of the soul, which succouring the distressed could give.

After much labour and time, the Lieutenant succeeded in obtaining a situation for Annette, and her aged friend. A

*MRS.*

*MRS. MANDERSON,*

a widow lady, who existed on a small income, in a neat little dwelling by the skirts of the town, consented to receive them for a weekly stipend, as little as she could afford to take, and not more than Osrick cheerfully consented to pay.

Mrs. Manderson, at the request of the Lieutenant, immediately visited the poor sufferers, undertook the management of the funerals of the deceased, and returned with the unhappy survivers to her house.

Such had been the employment of Osrick, which had kept him so long absent, and gave such alarm to his father, who now heard his recital with pleasure; and, as a tear glistened in his eye, he inwardly thanked Heaven for having blessed him with such a son.

"To-morrow, my boy," said Mr. Somerton, "we will visit Mrs. Manderson together. In the interim, should that

dastard, Puffarden, shew his face here, I will not forget to tell him what I think of him."

At the conclusion of Mr. Somerton's words, a servant entered the room, and announced the arrival of

*DOCTOR PUFFARDEN.*

"Talk of the devil," said the senior Somerton, "and his imps appear. Desire the Doctor to walk in."

Before we permit this important personage, however, to enter the room, we will make the reader somewhat better acquainted with his talents and character, than we have yet had an opportunity of doing.

Germany was the place of his birth; but having been transplanted to the genial soil of Albion at an early age, he had conquered the difficulties of the language, and could speak it with the ease and fluency of a native.

Of

Of obscure parentage, and heir to nothing but what his wits or subtlety could procure for him, he, after vicissitudes in abundance, was to be found seated in a tolerable mansion, where the name of *Puffarden*, surmounted with the pestle and mortar at the door, announced his new undertaking to the world.

Though in nowise educated to support himself in the line he had chosen, either with credit to himself, or advantage to others, his success, notwithstanding, more than equalled his expectations—a circumstance, among many others, illustrative of the credulity of the unsophisticated children of John Bull.

As it is usual in country towns, for every paltry vender of drugs, without the aid of a diploma, to be dignified with the appellation of *Doctor*, so, in conformity to provincial custom, this abortion of Esculapius, whenever we have occasion to mention him, we shall so distinguish; and, we trust, without giving of-

fence to those men of medicine, whose practice we approve, and whose characters we revere.

To astound the ignorant, and fret the nerves of applicant females, whom misfortune might direct to his mock laboratory for physic or advice, a scull, or the fleshless limbs of a human subject, were always placed within the focus of their perception, and which seldom failed to produce the effect desired.

At this period, this illiterate destroyer of the constitutions of the public, was about eight-and-forty years of age. His figure was rather below the common stature, his nose was sharp, his eyes appeared to derive their fire from that subtlety of low craft, which was never extinguished in his mind, and seemed to illumine his countenance, but that the distinguishing marks of pertness, imbecility, and pride, might be more strikingly conspicuous. Metaphorically to delineate his picture in few words—his head was wood, his face brass,

brass, his brain mud, his hand iron, and his heart stone—the three former rendered him ridiculous to the rich, the two latter a tyrannical oppressor, and a scourge to the poor.

### *THE INTERVIEW,*

and the conversation that passed between the Doctor, and the father and son, at Somerton Lodge, we shall now endeavour to describe.

The Doctor having made his bow, and taken his seat, the following conversation ensued:

*Mr. Somerton*—"To what circumstance, Sir, am I indebted for the honour of this visit?"

*Doctor Puffarden*—"The friendship which I possess for Mr. Somerton and his family would induce my visits often, did not more serious and weighty calls of business operate to prevent them. The real motive, however, of my visit at present,

is to have a little discourse with the Lieutenant, respecting the situation in which I discovered him this morning."

*Lieutenant*—"The poor unhappy girl, Sir, I believe is not unknown to you."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"You are right in your conjecture; and I wished for this interview, that she might not remain unknown *to you.*"

*Lieutenant*—"She explained to me her condition this morning."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"Indeed!"

*Lieutenant*—"Indeed."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"She's a mere vagrant—a lying little baggage—existing upon alms, and imposing a feigned tale of distress upon all who can have the patience to listen to her."

*Mr. Somerton*—"A mere vagrant!—a feigned tale of distress!—astonishing!"

*Doctor Puffarden.*—"Yes, yes, I knew I should astonish you, but it is true notwithstanding."

*Lieutenant*

*Lieutenant*—"And her parents died, I suppose, purposely to give an appearance of truth to those fables of domestic misery with which her invention might furnish her."

The Doctor became a little confused, He had no suspicion that the Lieutenant's humanity could have carried him to inspect such a mansion of misery as the cottage of Annette. After twisting his sharp nose twice or thrice in his handkerchief, and hemming as often, to get rid of the confusion he felt, he rejoined—

"Why, yes, her parents are dead, to be sure; but I cannot conceive how that circumstance can much afflict her—she is now rid of an incumbrance, and will no longer have them to support."

*Mr. Somerton*—"Poor girl! What was the cause of their death?"

Evading the question, he observed,

"I attended her father some time, and had I but so continued to have done, he might have done well."

*Mr. Somerton*—"And so might you."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"True, Sir, true; in my profession I always do well. But I was compelled to desire of Latour to get other advice, and——"

*Mr. Somerton*—"What then?"

*Doctor Puffarden*—"He died."

*Mr. Somerton*—"And pray what *compelled* you, in his trouble, to desert him?"

*Doctor Puffarden*—"Poverty! The labourer, you know, is worthy of his hire. I could not attend upon him for charity only, when I could be more profitably employed."

*Mr. Somerton*—"You could not have been more honourably employed than in assisting the wretched."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"Honour and business, Sir, must occasionally move in separate spheres. When I can do without the one, perhaps I may attend to the other—ha! ha!"

Without noticing the grin which succeeded

ceeded the absurdity of the latter remark,

*Mr. Somerton* continued—"The father of the poor girl, I have heard, was for some time afflicted with a wound in his leg?"

The confusion of the Doctor was repeated.

*Doctor Puffarden*—"He suffered but little from that, but——"

*Mr. Somerton*—"The dreadful operation to which he subsequently submitted, and for which there was no immediate occasion, sent him to an untimely grave! Heaven mend his heart that destroyed poor Latour."

*Lieutenant*—"Amen!"

The Doctor trembled universally. A sense of his own radical unworthiness, made him shake in his shoes. He arose suddenly from his chair, seized his hat, and prepared to depart.

*Mr. Somerton*—"Will you not say amen,

amen, likewise, to my prayer, Mr. Puffarden?"

The Doctor made an effort to comply, but *amen stuck in his throat.*

After a severe struggle, he stammered out the following words:

"Mr. Somerton, when I entered your house, I did not suppose that I should eventually have occasion to regret the visit. I clearly perceive, yes, Sir, I clearly perceive, that the strolling baggage who has imposed upon your son, has uttered some defamatory words of me. I may yet have it in my power to requite her as she deserves——"

*Mr. Somerton*—"If she will consent to take your physic!"

*Doctor Puffarden*—"I am in your house, Sir—"

*Mr. Somerton*—"Not at my request."

*Doctor Puffarden*—"No matter, Sir, the laws of hospitality should have taught you to have protected me from insult, not

to

to have been the aggressor yourself—However, another time, Sir, and I——"

A frown from the Lieutenant silenced him. He bowed, and then muttering something which neither of them understood, withdrew.

*Mr. Somerton*—"Peter, open the door for Mr. Puffarden."

Peter obeyed, and the Doctor presently disappeared.

"Guilt," continued Mr. Somerton, "was legibly written in his sharp countenance. Inhuman miscreant! Never, I hope, will Somerton Lodge be again disgraced by his presence. The labourer is worthy of his hire indeed—But the devil, as the immortal bard observes, can cite scripture for his purpose; and, in no particular instance, have I ever found the observation more amply verified.—But come, my boy, make the necessary alteration in your dress, and we will join the company in

*THE DRAWING-ROOM.*"

A Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, their daughter and niece, and a Mr. Belmont, who were intimate with the family at the Lodge, were, at this time, with Mrs. Somerton, taking a sociable dish of tea in the room above-mentioned. On Mr. Somerton and his son joining them, to the interrogatories of the party, what had detained the Lieutenant so long from home, the late interview they had had with Doctor Puffarden, was recapitulated.

The Doctor's inhumanity called forth suitable comments; though in Mr. Belmont it failed to excite those symptoms of surprise which were visible in the others.

"I am not unacquainted with the Doctor's character," said he; "and to prove to you that it has not been too highly-coloured in what has been said, I will relate

late to you a circumstance of his cruelty, which I witnessed in

*THE PUNISHMENT OF A SOLDIER,*

and which happened but a few weeks previous to my quitting the army.

"A private in the regiment to which I belonged, was tried by a court-martial for a misdemeanor, and sentenced to receive five hundred lashes. The day appointed for the execution of the sentence arrived, when the surgeon of the regiment being absent, the very man you have been speaking of, Mr., alias Doctor, Puffarden, was solicited to officiate for him. The Doctor readily complied; and the culprit, surrounded by the regiment, was, at length, fixed to the halberts, to receive his awarded castigation.

"The offender was naturally of a delicate constitution; and the first application of the cat-o'-nine-tails deeply lacerated the flesh. His shrieks were loud

and

and piercing, and affected every individual present, Puffarden excepted.

"About three hundred lashes had been applied, when, quite exhausted with pain and loss of blood, the miserable object fainted. Repeated interrogations were previously addressed to Puffarden, to ascertain if it were not his opinion that the soldier had received as much of his sentence as his health, at that time, could bear; who as repeatedly answered in the negative, and urged that the lashes should be given with more energy and effect.

"Such enquiries are always made of the attendant surgeon, (where correction is to be short of death, lest the proceedings, contrary to law, should have a fatal termination) in whose power it is, by a single word, to stay the progress of punishment.

"The commanding officer, shocked at the inhumanity he had been compelled to witness, and cut to the soul at the soldier's condition, at length ordered him to

to be released from the halberts, and supported to his quarters, contrary to the advice of the other, whose sanguinary disposition apparently would not have spared the mutilated victim, even in the gasp of death.

"Had the man ever done him an injury, his cruelty, in the passion of revenge, might have been accounted for; but it did not appear that he had ever beheld him until the period of his chastisement; so that his barbarity must have been the spontaneous effusion of a depraved and merciless heart.

"All present gazed at him with a horror in their looks, which could scarcely have been heightened had they supposed him the devil! but the only symptoms which his countenance exhibited were those of regret, that he could not, more accordant to his wishes, be obeyed.

"In the army," continued Mr. Belmont, "we are often compelled to be present at the punishment of individuals, which

which shock us much to behold. The necessity of the case, not our private feelings, on such occasions, must have the first consideration. Without punishment, there would be no law; all subordination would be at an end; and the vicious would trample on, and defy the more worthy branches of society. It is also right that the correction of an offender, particularly in the army, should not be privately administered. It would be inconsistent with the approved principles of our venerable constitution, to hide from public inspection the operation of its laws: and the salutary effects which are derived from creating the fear of offending in others, would be lost. Precepts well applied, do much; but example does more. The laws of justice should never be violated with impunity, though justice should ever be seasoned with mercy. Without the latter, the former can scarcely be said to exist; for to be just, we *must* be merciful. He that would strain the law,

law, to make the torture of a sufferer more grievous than, for the common good, the pure principle of the law requires, is a disgrace to the human species, and deserves not the name of man. Some demon, when Nature formed him, must secretly have admixed those seeds of darkness in his composition, which Nature never intended he should have, and marred with cruelty the divinity of her work."

"Did the poor wretch, of whom you have been speaking," enquired Mrs. Stokes, "die of the chastisement he received?"

"No," replied Mr. Belmont, "he ultimately recovered; but for many days he continued at the brink of the grave. The remainder of his sentence, through the humanity of his commander, and the penitence he displayed, was remitted."

The conversation now turned upon more enlivening and general subjects. Quadrille was, at length, proposed, when the

the whole party presently became actively employed at the card-table.

Having thus agreeably engaged the coterie, we embrace the opportunity of making the reader somewhat better acquainted with a few particulars relative to them; and of which it is not possible that he can have received any previous intimation. We shall, therefore, begin with

*MR. BELMONT,*

who had been an ensign about six years, and was in a fair way for promotion, when an affair of honour calling him into the field, his right arm was so much injured by a wound he received, that amputation just below the elbow was the ultimate result, and which incapacitated him from a longer continuance in the army.

He had resigned his commission, at this time, about eleven months, and at an age not exceeding seven-and-twenty. His

parents had been dead some years previous to the unfortunate duel, leaving their son sole master of his own actions, and an estate which brought him in something better than eighteen hundred pounds annually.

Belmont was dissipated, and, like some other young men of fortune, it gave him more pleasure than pain to know that the world thought him so. The advice of greybeards, to use an expression of his own, who had outlived the enjoyment of all but *rational* pursuits, he was the foremost to ridicule, though the pain with which he had occasionally been afflicted by indiscreet and intemperate conduct, had, at times, evinced to him the propriety of being regulated by such precepts as he had publicly derided, and affected to despise.—He had been known to the senior Somerton, who had been intimate with his father, almost from childhood, and a sincere friendship existed between him and the Lieutenant.

Mr.

Mr. Somerton had frequently intimated to Osrick, the danger of such a companion; but Osrick had ever defended his friend so warmly, that his father, at length, was more than half persuaded that rumour had much exaggerated his faults, and that his censure on them, consequently, impartially considered, was premature.

Belmont, in fact, was more vicious from thoughtlessness, and dissipated from fashion, than unworthy from principle. Naturally possessing a manly person, a cheerful disposition, a hale constitution, and an active spirit, he sought pleasure for its bustle; and, without reflecting upon the probable consequences which might ensue, readily yielded to the impassioned influence of the moment, on almost all occasions.

The sober trammels of wedlock he felt no wish to be encumbered with. Nature, he imagined, never designed him for a monotonous domestic life. Love and

variety he considered the real enjoyments of existence; and those, while youth was on his side, he seemed determined not to lose.

A debauchee from habit, he sought not to alleviate distress, by visiting the mansions of the unfortunate, but to live only for himself, though he detested an act of cruelty; and a tale of woe, when chance directed it to his ears, seldom failed to find its way to his heart.

*MISS CASTLEBY,*

the niece of Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, a beautiful and interesting girl of seventeen, had long been, by Mr. Belmont, viewed with an eye of admiration. Could any serious thoughts of matrimony have dwelt within him, he would there have sought to gratify the honourable propensity; but to resign his liberty for the possession of one object, was, in his mind, preposterous, and carefully to be avoided.

The full blue eyes of Miss Castleby, the vermeil tinctured lip, and the delicate combination of the lily and the rose which her cheeks displayed, had, however, kindled that flame of love within him, which he found to be totally beyond his art to extinguish.

This lovely girl, left an orphan at an early age, with scarcely any fortune to support her, was brought up by Mrs. Stokes, and educated with her own daughter, who was about three years her elder.

Few young ladies were more accomplished than, at this time, was Alethea Castleby; though her want of fortune apparently hid many of the perfections she possessed, and saved her from the tiresome notice of mercenary suitors.—Not so her cousin

*MISS STOKES.*

Her expectations were considerable; and

and dissipated peers, with broken fortunes, had, more than once, been unsuccessful candidates for her hand.

Constance Stokes was more distinguished as being a very fine girl, than a very handsome one. Her figure was extremely good; nor was her face indifferent, though it possessed not that captivating expression and bewitching softness, which were the pleasing characteristics of Alethea's. An appearance of harshness, in some measure foreign to her mind, triumphed over the milder lineaments of her countenance, and impressed you with a persuasion that her disposition was at once haughty, irritable, and commanding.

*MR. AND MRS. STOKES*

had long been on the most friendly terms with Mr. Somerton. As a merchant of integrity, Mr. Stokes had principally realized what he possessed; and, in similar

pursuits, Mr. Somerton had, also, been successful.

It was the secret wish of both of them to see their daughter well married; and had they betrayed the necessary symptoms of regard for each other, it would have given them a sincere pleasure to have consented to her union with the Lieutenant.

Determined, however, not to controul her in her choice, she, in this particular, was permitted to pursue the bent of her own inclination, and either to countenance or reject the suits of those who might aspire to obtain her favours.

The Lieutenant, unfortunately, was not among the latter. Alethea appeared the most to have mastered his affections, though a syllable of love he had never breathed to either of them.

Mr. Stokes was one of those easy characters, who leave the management of all their domestic concerns to their wives. If she planned or proposed any thing, it never

never met with his opposition; and he seldom adventured upon any project of his own, without having previously consulted her, and obtained the sanction of her consent, and the wisdom of her advice.

This naturally gave an air of importance to Mrs. Stokes, who was his second wife, which strengthened with her years; though, to do her justice, she was less peremptory in her proceedings than, under such circumstances, might altogether be expected.

Next to her daughter, Mrs. Stokes had an interest at heart for Miss Castleby, (to whom she was only related by marriage, Alethea being the niece of a former wife of her husband,) who to live with, and not esteem and love, was impossible.

The regard which Alethea had excited in Belmont, she had for some time suspected; and she believed that Mr. Belmont was not wholly indifferent to her,

though she had said nothing to Alethea on the subject, but had secretly resolved, that should Mr. Belmont ever openly profess himself the lover of her niece, not to place any impediment in the way of their union. She little suspected the real character and designs of the object of whom she was disposed to judge so favourably.

The cold behaviour of the Lieutenant to her daughter, was a subject of some disappointment, and more of regret, to her; she wished to have just such a man for her son-in-law, and yet hoped that those wishes, in the end, would be gratified.

That the Lieutenant should entertain any serious thoughts of gaining the affections of Alethea, her want of fortune, she conceived, did not render feasible; for his father, he must be aware, would never consent to such a union; whereas Mr. Belmont, having no person's inclination

tion to consult but his own, might readily enter into such measures, and domestic harmony be the result.

Whatever provision Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, so far as related to pecuniary matters, intended to make eventually in favour of their niece, was unknown to all but themselves. The ground of interest, therefore, was of too precarious a nature for an avaricious suitor to speculate on. Not that Mrs. Stokes suspected the Lieutenant to be a man of this description, for the known amiableness of his character contradicted the supposition, or rather would not suffer it for a moment to exist, but prudence might suggest to him that a wife with property was to be preferred to a wife with none, where both objects were equally accomplished, and equally good.

The irresistible influence which the god of love might have over the mind, did not, in these reflections, enter into the worthy lady's imagination.

That Alethea had somewhat the advantage over Constance in personal attractions, Mrs. Stokes was compelled unwillingly to allow; but the more weighty attraction, *money*, she considered as an ample compensation for so trifling a superiority; and he must be a singular mortal, she thought, who would not think so too.

Her views, in respect to the Lieutenant and her daughter, she had, in the course of her visits to the Lodge, developed to

*MRS. SOMERTON,*

who entered into the spirit of them with an avidity that pleased her.

Mrs. Somerton, in fact, thought Osrick could not act more wisely than by espousing Constance; and readily promised her assistance in endeavouring to bring about so desirable an event.

This circumstance occasioned the two ladies

ladies to be on the best of all possible terms with each other; and the friendship between their husbands strengthened as they witnessed the mutual amity of their wives.

The designs of Mrs. Stokes, in respect to Osrick and her daughter, would not have been promoted by Mrs. Somerton, had she possessed an idea that her conduct would be disapproved by her husband, who, as well as so young a woman could love a man so many years older than herself, was beloved by her.

The esteem she felt for Mr. Somerton was sincere; and to render his days cheerful was the summit of her wishes.

The person of Mrs. Somerton was not inelegant. Her countenance was open and pleasing; and a frankness of disposition might be perceived in her dark expressive eyes.

Her father had rented a farm of Mr. Somerton for many years, in which he succeeded sufficiently well to enable him

to give a tolerable education to his daughter, perhaps somewhat beyond what is usual for persons in his sphere of life to bestow on their children.

Her union gave to her father that property for life, of which he had been previously only a tenant at will; and secured the happiness of those of whom she was affectionately fond; for her mother still was living.

Principally brought up in retirement, Mrs. Somerton pined not for those amusements, which persons of her age are expected to indulge in; and seldom hinted a desire of being present at any that had not previously been mentioned and advised by her husband.

Thus swayed by prudence, and reconciled, by early habits, to seclusion, her days were not without their proportion of happiness; and the Lieutenant respected her for the genuine qualities of her heart.

Discontent was seldom visible at the Lodge,

Lodge, for its inmates possessed a social confidence in each other.

Their friends were more select than numerous, at least those that were in the habit of visiting them often, among whom the present party were included.

Six months in the year, however, Mr. and Mrs. Stokes spent in London, in Rutland, and in Bath, having a mansion in each place, and devoted the other six to the salutary breezes of the ocean, and the pleasures of the coast.

Mr. Belmont, though he had no settled habitation, often took up his residence in the neighbourhood of the Lodge, particularly in the dry part of the year, when fashionable hilarity, dissipation, and frolic, rendered it more congenial to the temper of his mind.

At the Lodge, on the Lieutenant's account, he ever met with a grateful reception; where, to a late hour, on the pre-

sent occasion, he continued with the party at quadrille.

The next day

*THE PROMISED VISIT*

of Mr. Somerton, to enquire after the luckless Annette, was attended to; and he and the Lieutenant called on Mrs. Manderson together.

The poor girl, Mrs. Manderson informed them, was still in great distress; and what contributed the more to wound her feelings, her aged friend, she said, she believed was dying.

Mrs. Manderson would have summoned Annette to their presence, but they would not permit her. When she was more reconciled to what had, and might yet happen, they said, they would speak to her; and, in the interim, begged that whatever her situation, or her friend's required, might, at their expence, be procured.

From

From Mrs. Manderson's they took a walk through the town, when they learned many iniquitous particulars relative to the practice of Doctor Puffarden, of which they were ignorant before.

The feelings of the father and son could but induce severe animadversions upon what they heard, particularly as the Doctor had been classed among the occasional visitants of the Lodge, and had even obtained patients through their recommendation.

But little had either been aware of the callousness of his heart, and the inhumanity of his conduct, prior to the distressing incidents of the preceding day.

The highwayman, who risks his own destruction to rob the solitary traveller of his property, appears a character just and humane, when compared with the treacherous poltroon, who steals into a mansion, like an envenomed toad, to disseminate his poison unperceived, and feed

upon the injuries he may occasion to all within.

*GUILT,*

for a time, may seem to prosper; but the whips and stings of futurity are dreadful to contemplate. Happy the offender whose punishment is confined to earth, and whose soul repentance purifies, ere the thunder of Heaven is uplifted against him, and he sinks to rise no more. The best may err, but what must be his lot who dies in an act of premeditated guilt? He who voluntarily sins, places his soul on the brink of Hell's gulph, and defies the power of the Omnipotent. Providence, in its mercy, may spare, but contrition only can ensure his ultimate preservation.

Such were the reflections which the information Mr. Somerton received respecting the Doctor, at the moment inspired; and he inwardly prayed that he might not

be

be too suddenly summoned from a world he had injured, for a sincere and heartfelt repentance, to wipe away his crimes, and appease the wrath of the Eternal.

Mr. Somerton, at length, proposed returning to the Lodge; but, as the day was fine, the Lieutenant excused himself from accompanying him, that he might pay

*A VISIT TO MR. GRANGE.*

His father smiled, and after bidding him to keep out of the way of the smugglers, he returned home without him.

The Lieutenant found Mr. Grange, though nearly enveloped in flannels, quite as well, after what he had collected of the state of his health from Peter, as he expected to find him. The old gentleman expressed himself very happy to see him; and with little persuasion prevailed on him to stay, and take a family dinner with his wife and daughter.

The

The day passed agreeably. The Lieutenant, about four hours after sunset, prepared to return to the Lodge; but he was not permitted to depart, until he had passed his word to spend another day in a similar manner before he joined his regiment.

The distance from the village in which Mr. Grange resided, we have before noticed, was not more than three miles from the Lodge, two miles of which the road ran near to the margin of the cliff; but by diverging from the regular track, and crossing the downs which lie between the two places, the distance was diminished nearly three quarters of a mile.

This route, on the present occasion, the Lieutenant preferred. The night, though the moon was too far in its wane to have much influence, was not very dark, for the twinkling stars darted their effulgent beams from the arch of Heaven, and faintly rendered visible the world beneath.

Walking

Walking at a moderate rate, the Lieutenant, without interruption, had reached the summit of one of the highest hills he had to cross, and was just descending to the valley below, when he suddenly beheld a tall female figure standing on the slope, but a few paces to his right.

He halted. He had not perceived the advance of the object he gazed at, and was somewhat surprised at the circumstance. Her attire seemed of the purest white; a deep veil of the same description depended from a snowy coif, and totally concealed her features from observation. A superstitious mind, accrediting the existence of immaterial appearances, might have imagined that

*A SPECTRE*

had arisen from the earth, to astound, and lead him into danger.

Though the Lieutenant was somewhat surprised at what he beheld, no apprehensions

sions, however, of that kind possessed him. It certainly was an unusual hour, he thought, for a female to be parading the downs unattended; and it was more than probable that she had lost her way, and had been fruitlessly endeavouring to discover the path which led to her residence: humanity, therefore, as well as politeness, whispered him that he should offer his assistance, and, if not unpleasant to her, escort her home. He accordingly advanced towards her, uttering a few necessary words to make his intention known, that she might not be alarmed at his approach.

A hollow and lengthened groan at the instant saluted his ear, and again occasioned him to halt: and while his eyes, in astonishment, were yet directed to the figure, a blue flame spread itself about the veil, which it presently consumed, and the lank and fleshless jaws of a skeleton were distinctly to be perceived!

Horror-struck, he naturally recoiled from

from the dreadful object, which sinking apparently into earth, gradually vanished from his sight.

A lack of courage was not a fault of which the Lieutenant could be accused, but a surprise so terrific, so sudden and unexpected, could but render him irresolute at the moment, and excite sensations not the most pleasant to be borne.

Recovering his scattered spirits, he hesitated not to approach the spot on which the phantom had appeared; but nothing remained to afford him any conjecture as to the cause of it. Sulphureous atoms had impregnated the atmosphere, in nowise agreeable to respiration, and, in the end, contributed to induce his precipitate departure.

In a state of mind not the most enviable, he, at length, reached the Lodge; where the quadrille-table he found was again occupied by

### THE FORMER PARTY.

The appalling incident of the night had a visible effect on the Lieutenant's spirits, an effect which did not long escape the notice of his father, who, at first, suspected that something unpleasant had befallen his friend Grange; which suspicion, however, the Lieutenant speedily removed.

"Why what then has happened, boy," inquired his father, "to give you such a gloomy and thoughtful countenance? The smugglers, surely, did not interrupt you a second time in your walk!"

The ladies smiled; but the serious aspect which the Lieutenant preserved, sufficiently indicated to them that something of an extraordinary nature had occurred to perplex and pain him.

"From Mr. Grange's," said the Lieutenant, "I crossed the downs in my way home."

"Well,"

"Well," remarked Mr. Somerton, "is there any thing strange in that? I often do the same myself."

"Were you ever on those downs, Sir, after sunset?"

"Often—but what motive had you for asking?"

"I am almost afraid to tell you, lest you should conceive me a maniac—It's very singular—"

"What's very singular, Osrick?"

"I have been surprised, and I may say alarmed, Sir, on those downs, this night, beyond what I ever experienced on any occasion before."

Curiosity was now strongly excited in all present; and the Lieutenant, at last, to their united entreaties, related what he had seen.

His words, in the female part of the assemblage, created such strong emotions of terror, that the cards were instantly thrown aside, and they involuntarily drew their chairs closer to each other.

"Bless

"Bless me," ejaculated Mrs. Somerton, "what a strange adventure have you described to us! I declare I shall be afraid in future to quit my house after sunset, lest some terrible vision should appear to me also."

"Pshaw," said Mrs. Stokes, "the Lieutenant has merely invented this tale, to ascertain to what extent our credulity might carry us—nothing more, depend on it—though the cruel creature has thrown me into such a tremor, that I shall not be myself again for some time."

"As I live, I saw it!" exclaimed the Lieutenant, with a force adapted to impress the belief of it on his auditors. "Had I but merely been informed of such a circumstance as you are, I believe I should have felt an equal disinclination to accredit it."

"Heaven protect us!" respired Mrs. Stokes; "I should certainly have expired, had I been so terrified," articulated Constance; and Alethea, though she

continued

continued mute, looked as much alarmed as her cousin.

The serious demeanour of the Lieutenant gave the gravity of astonishment to the features of Belmont, and his father.

"Singular, indeed," at length observed the latter, "is what you have told us, Osrick! It would puzzle a priest to know what to make of it!"

Much more was said on the subject; the ultimate result of which was, that Belmont agreed with the Lieutenant to visit the same part of the downs, at the same hour, on the following night.

The party now arose to depart; and Mr. Belmont, soon after, as was usual with him, took his seat next to the fair Alethea, in the carriage that was to convey them to the residence of Mr. Stokes, which they safely reached, when he bade them adieu for the night.

Belmont, the next evening, was punctual to his appointment; and

*THE NOCTURNAL EXCURSION,*

as had been resolved on, was presently commenced by him and the Lieutenant.

The night was unpleasant, for congregated clouds, through the gloom, were to be perceived in the horizon to the north; the wind, gradually acquiring additional strength, being felt from the opposite quarter, from whence the roar of old Ocean, as indicative of an approaching storm, was heard.

The Lieutenant and Belmont, notwithstanding the wet jackets with which they were threatened, pressed forward, being each fully resolved not to return to the Lodge, ere they had accomplished their design.

On reaching the summit of the first hill, the unfavourable symptoms of the night became more menacing. The few twinkling stars which, previously, were here and there to be distinguished, peeping from

from the cope of Heaven, as it were to watch their progress, had now entirely disappeared, and almost total darkness predominated. The wind whistled dismally, and large globules of rain began to moisten the earth.

"We had better quicken our pace," said the Lieutenant," though we have but a short distance farther to walk, ere we shall arrive at the desired spot; when, should the tempest continue to gather strength, I think it will be prudent in us to direct our steps homeward."

With increased speed, therefore, they descended this hill, keeping as closely together as they could; and were presently on the rise of the one adjoining, losing nothing of that courage which had distinguished them on the outset.

"We are now about the place, Belmont, we set out for," at length said the Lieutenant, "as nearly as I can guess in this impenetrable gloom, which is not altogether favourable to our purpose."

"I think differently," replied Belmont; "for the purpose which brought us here considered, the gloom is by no means amiss; for should her ghostship favour us with her presence, the fire-works, which you say she can amuse us with, will be seen to the best and most brilliant advantage."

"Psha! Belmont, this is no time for jesting.—Be serious for a short time, pray, if it is only to oblige me."

"Well, well, as it is your request, I will endeavour to be so; though, I assure you, this is the first ghost-hunting expedition I was ever engaged in."

"I would wish you, however, Belmont, to recollect that I undertook this walk expressly at your own request; you have, therefore, nothing to reproach me with on this occasion."

"I don't reproach you, though it was certainly your flame and sulphur story that brought me here."

"I begin

"I begin to regret that I related it to you."

"There is no occasion for that; but pray permit me to enjoy my remarks on the subject."

"Shall we turn back?"

"As you please; for the good lady being of that spare habit you described, is probably aware that she may take cold if she wanders abroad in such a night as this, and may, therefore, prudently disappoint our expectations, if we had any, of beholding her, by seeing company at home."

"Don't be so ridiculous, Belmont!"

"Now, positively, Lieutenant, could you have imagined it possible two days ago?"

"What?"

"That such a singular mortal as a ghost-hunter could be heard of in the nineteenth century!"

"A tremendous flash of lightning, which almost instantly was succeeded by

a deafening peal of thunder, prevented the Lieutenant's reply.

The rain now began to descend in torrents; and the God of tempest to give additional horrors to the night.

The mirth of Belmont was soon lost in the dangers that surrounded him. The rain had already penetrated his garments to his skin; and the resistless violence of the wind had driven him northward, considerably beyond the track he knew his safety required he should pursue, in endeavouring to retrace his steps to the Lodge.

At intervals, he had repeatedly called to the Lieutenant, but the howlings of



prevented his hearing any answer to his words, if any had been returned.

Once or twice, as the lightning hissed along the inundated turf, and illumined the dreary void for an instant, he fancied he

he beheld an object but a moderate distance from him; but whether or not it was the Lieutenant, he could not tell, though circumstances led him to suppose it could be no one else.

The thunder now became more lengthened, loud, and appalling; the flashes which preceded each burst more forked and vivid; and the wind and rain, mixed with hail, proportionably increased.

In the whole course of his days, Belmont had never been so completely harrassed, alarmed, and bewildered. In one instant, he could imagine himself in the very centre of a hissing blaze of fire, and in another, groping his way for succour, without any hope of finding it, in a terrific world of water and darkness, which menaced his immediate annihilation.

Nearly exhausted, he, at length, clung to the projecting stump of a tree, which chance directed him to, for support. At this perilous juncture, he heard splashing

sounds, not unlike such as an horseman, dashing over the humid waste at full speed, would occasion; and the fear of being trampled to death, augmented his other apprehensions.

Something now rapidly passed him; though not an object, at the moment, would the pitchy darkness permit the eye to discover.

Again the lightning flashed, the thunder, apparently, burst just above his head, and, as it died gradually away, an indescribable and confused noise floated in the wind.

In a moment the desolation of the surrounding scenery was distinctly to be perceived. It was not occasioned by the lightning, for the glare was universal, steady, and continued.

At this period Belmont was enabled to discover that he stood on the very brink of

*A FRIGHTFUL ABYSS,*

the stump which supported him being part of a fence, which had been originally intended for the security of travellers who might wander that way.

He recoiled from the dreadful chasm with horror; for he felt that he had been providentially rescued from the very jaws of death.

The cause of that general light which still predominated, was now revealed to him, for

*A METEOR,*

of prodigious dimensions, wound its course in the troubled atmosphere above him.

The object which a few seconds before had passed him, he also descried:

*A WILD OX,*

maddened by the peltings of the storm, raged furiously (as the wind drove the rain into his eyes and ears), and turned up the earth in anguish with his nose and horns.

The affrighted animal now distinguished Belmont, and, with hideous roar, instantly made towards him.

To avoid the ruthless beast, and escape the precipice, appeared impossible. Belmont shrieked with terror, his hair bristled on his head, and the chill of death seemed to freeze his heart.

At this awful crisis, the meteor, with a horrid noise, exploded—darkness again prevailed—the maddened animal passed his object, and headlong plunged down the yawning gulf which stood open to receive him.

The flitting spirits of Belmont at length gradually

gradually returned. Twice had he been preserved from destruction—from death, in the most terrible and ghastly shape.

The rain now became less violent, the wind somewhat moderated, and Belmont, keeping rather a southern direction, once more removed, fraught with the hope of being speedily enabled to extricate himself effectually from his difficulties, by reaching the Lodge.

Thus relieved from the dangers which had previously menaced him, we shall leave him for the present, to recount the

*DISASTERS*

which befel the Lieutenant.

Separated from Belmont in the elemental strife, the Lieutenant had endeavoured to shape his course homeward, but the hurricane rendered his efforts ineffectual.

Drenched to the skin by the falling,

torrents, the extraordinary copiousness of which might almost have created the apprehension that the globe, by a second deluge, was about to be hid beneath a world of waters, he was compelled to move at the influence of the gale, and, from the uneven surface of the ground he trod, not unfrequently at the most imminent hazard of his life.

Not alarmed by the storm, though much inconvenienced by its fervour, he trusted in Providence for protection. That power which could annihilate him in the calm of sunshine, though guarded by every human security, he felt, could hurtless bear him through the wreck of tempest, and raise him superior to despair in danger.

From the slope of the down where he had been separated from Belmont, he was tempest-driven over its summit, to the valley beyond; from whence, over ploughed land, he was necessitated to continue a fatiguing course to a considerable distance,

tance, until, by the lightning's intermitting glare, he found himself in a narrow defile, the hills rising to an immense height on each side of him. The wind forcing a passage through this streight, blew with redoubled force, and, as it hurried him along, rendered it extremely difficult for him to preserve himself from falling, an event to be avoided, as he hoped to escape suffocation in the water and mud, through which, ankle deep, he was compelled to wade. The rain and hail, in this unenviable condition, seemed to lacerate his flesh, by the immense fury with which it was driven against him, like pebbles sharp and pointed, and defied him to turn his head.

Winding, ultimately, round the northern extremity of one of the steeps, the rage of the tempest was less severely felt, and he halted for a few seconds, to recover his nearly exhausted strength.

The sparkling meteor was here seen by him, and the effulgence which the appal-

ling ball of fire diffused ere it exploded, gave him an opportunity of turning his eyes around, in the hope of discovering a refuge, until the inclemencies of the night should cease.

A thick copse he beheld skirted one of the lofty eminences, a little in advance; to gain which, he also perceived he must cross a ditch of no trifling magnitude, in which the water had swelled until it laved

*A WOODEN BRIDGE,*

formed apparently of loose planks, to enable pedestrians, with little difficulty, to pass over it.

This bridge, he endeavoured to persuade himself, led to the solitary habitation of some peasant; and prudence, he imagined, advised him to direct his most serious attention towards it.

While gazing intently that way, he fancied he beheld the form of a human figure,

figure, as emerging from the underwood which grew on the opposite side, probably some person benighted and bewildered like himself, and not unlikely Belmont, thought he; when, at the instant, the terrific explosion of the meteor, filling the dank atmosphere with its fœtid particles, once more left him in total darkness.

The quivering streams, however, with which the ignivomous clouds continued occasionally to pierce the black veil of night, at intervals, for an instant only, exposed the bridge to his view.

With cautious tread he proceeded in a direction towards it, the ground becoming more swampy every step he took; until, at last, he found his foot upon the extremity of the planks he meant to cross.

The depth of the ditch, nor the strength of the bridge, he could not be at all acquainted with, though the latter, from its situation, (or why was it placed there?) he imagined competent to bear, at least, his weight; and which he now began, as deliberately

berately as the wind decreased in power; though frequently annoying him in sudden gusts, as it flapped from the southern downs, would permit.

Having reached about the centre of the bridge, the loose boards of which it was indeed composed, he fancied began to tremble, and sink beneath his pressure. To retreat, at this juncture, he conceived more dangerous than to advance; therefore, by a sudden spring, he precipitated himself over, and met violently in contact with some unseen object, who, in his efforts to preserve his balance, by the splashing of the water, the Lieutenant supposed had taken an unfortunate curve, and pitched headlong into the ditch.

The shock not only alarmed the Lieutenant, but it had nearly plunged him into the water likewise; had which been the case, his adventures in this world, in all probability, would have been brought to a close by the accident.

As it was, recovering from his surprise,

and

and finding himself unhurt, his first object was to offer assistance to the individual he had innocently injured—but that was impossible; for though he called as loudly as he could, to prove his readiness, to the utmost of his ability, to aid any one in danger, no answer was returned to his words; that if any one had been so unfortunate as he supposed, that he had sunk to rise no more, could be but the presumption.

An accident of so melancholy a description was in nowise adapted to raise the drooping spirits of the honest soldier. He lamented it from his soul; and would have repaired the misfortune he had so unhappily and unavoidably occasioned, at the extremest risk of his own life.

For some time he kept hovering about the spot, in the expectation of hearing sounds, that would direct his efforts, and ease his mind of the burthen that pressed on it; but none such saluted him. The hollow responses of the declining hurri-

cane

cane only were heard in the regions which immediately surrounded him; nor could the lightning's intermittent glare, momentarily becoming more faint, lead to the discovery he wished to make.

Turning towards the copse, the Lieutenant now beheld a pale glimmering light streaming through the underwood, which, not doubting but it proceeded from some distant cottage, he immediately shaped his course towards it.

Keeping the light in his eye, he had penetrated

*THE COPSE*

some yards, when a loud rustling among the trees, induced him to call out, to ascertain if any person was near to him; but no answer was returned to his enquiry. A vivid flash of fire to his right, however, the moment after, somewhat startled him; it might be lightning he conceived, until his scenting the strong vapour of exploded gunpowder

gunpowder gave him an idea to the contrary. The rustling among the trees had also been repeated, and he felt satisfied that some one had hastily retired from the wood.

To gain the cottage, which he strove to persuade himself could not be far from him, he now became doubly anxious, and he, therefore, resolutely persevered in forcing a passage through all impediments.

The water, which had lodged on the foliage of the taller trees and shrubs, continued copiously to drench him in his progress, until he at last found himself in a narrow beaten track, and free from that annoyance.

The intense darkness which had previously pervaded all parts, had, by this time, somewhat wore away, as the waning moon, less obscured by clouds, became faintly to be distinguished, and which enabled the Lieutenant to discover the nature of the path he had gained, closely

guarded

guarded by a thick hedge on either side, and which he determined to pursue. It conducted him, in a zig-zag direction, to a considerable distance, and, as he imagined, into the very heart of the coppice. The light which had induced him to enter the place, occasionally disappeared, and then again caught his eye, as he advanced, according to the windings of the road, and the thickness of the impediments which grew about him. A more secluded retreat, he thought, could scarcely be conceived; and the flash which preceded the vapour of gunpowder, had already given him the most serious apprehensions for his safety.

Unarmed, and much exhausted by fatigue, he felt that he might become an easy prey to the reptiles of rapine, if any such infested the spot, who probably might not be content to take the little property he had about him, without his life.

To defend himself to the utmost, in case of an attack, however, he resolutely determined,

determined, with such a weapon as the exigence of his condition could afford him; and a club, of moderate weight, consequently, he ultimately succeeded in detaching from the parent stem, by an application to his pocket knife.

This effected, he again advanced, in the hope of arriving, eventually, at some friendly habitation; and thus, as the storm was nearly over, of receiving instructions how to conduct himself by the nearest and safest way back to the Lodge.

After continuing his progress, with due circumspection, for some time, he found the narrow passage he was in terminated by thick bushy hedges, as closely entwined as those on his right and left, and he could proceed no farther.

The light, as proceeding from a taper at no great distance, now darted its sickly rays more towards the surface of the earth than it had appeared to do before, which induced the Lieutenant to stoop, and, if possible, to discover from whence it issued; when

when an opening in the wood he found, through which, by keeping his body bent, he could pass.

This aperture took him into another path, more narrow and winding than the former, and more irradiated by the glimmering, the source of which he sought.

Again a rustling noise about him arrested his attention, but it was but of short duration; he recommenced his search; and, in the end, his passage was a second time obstructed by the termination of the road.

Seeking now for an outlet, he was not disappointed, when again bending his body, to avail himself of the benefit, if any could be expected to arise from it, the light he had traced, he perceived, issued through the time-worn interstices of a door, horizontally fixed in the ground.

The Lieutenant was in nowise eased of the fears which haunted him, by this discovery. He hesitated—it was dangerous,

gerous, he thought, to proceed—yet what was he to do? he could not remain where he was, and he much doubted if, without assistance, he could now, by retreating, extricate himself from the wood.

It was plain that the door could not lead to the habitation of a peasant, for what could induce a man of that description so to bury himself? or, in fact, any one whose conduct was correct, and who dreaded not detection, and the notice of the world?

Yet that the place was occupied by somebody, the light sufficiently manifested—probably by banditti, though of such a horde he had never received any intimation as being occasionally employed in the county of Sussex.

He had once been beset and detained by smugglers, and the probability that the door led to a dépôt of their contraband stores, now struck him. The obscurity of the situation, its secret and intri-

cate

cate entrance, its moderate distance from the coast, all forcibly operated to establish this belief, and warn him of his danger.

In any other place but at the very door of their secret magazine, the idea of smugglers would have failed to alarm him. He thought of them not as beings who delight in plunder and blood; but when traced to their haunts, and the fear of losses operated to enrage them, he knew they were desperate, and an innocent individual might fall a victim to the impassioned influence of the moment.

Could his real condition have been satisfactorily explained to them, he would not have feared gaining their protection; but how was that to be done? for a pistol-shot might reach his brain the instant they discovered him, even before he had an opportunity of endeavouring to soften their asperity by words.

The Lieutenant certainly did not want courage, and consequently was but seldom to be intimidated; but the bravest might feel

feel a degree of alarm, when a superiority of force menaced to oppose and overthrow them.

Osrick had never before been so critically situated! The more he pondered how to proceed, the more perplexed and confused he became—he feared to advance, and was equally apprehensive of what might befal him, should he now attempt to retreat.

Resolving at length to enter

*THE CAVERN,*

for a receptacle of this description, he was convinced, was there concealed, he moved forward; and, in the end, by an iron-ring affixed to it, succeeded in raising the door; and by the dropping branches of the trees, tightly secured it from returning to its closed position, ere he had examined what lay hid beneath.

A winding flight of steps were now visible to him, which he presently descended,

cended, and found himself in a narrow arched passage, which branched into others, both to the right and left, while, at its extremity, in a direct line, he observed an half-closed door, from which the light issued that had attracted him to the spot.

Gaining this door, he entered a small oval apartment formed of stone and bricks, and vaulted like the passage which led to it. A dirty lamp, on a square stone pile, not unlike the pedestal of a statue, stood in the centre, and diffused a sickly glimmering around.

Not a vestige in any part could he discover, that the place had been appropriated to the concealment of the illicit traffic of smugglers; a circumstance which his preceding reflections had in nowise prepared him to expect.

Seated in the wall to the right, and secured with bolts of more than common magnitude, in this singular apartment, appeared another door, which now caught the

the Lieutenant's notice, and invited his approach.

The ponderous bolts he easily slid from the mortices, when the door, by its own weight, and of its own accord, fell gradually open.

A heavy sigh, and soon after the rattling of chains, were heard in the dark space beyond, which the Lieutenant, seizing the lamp, was preparing to explore, when the murmuring of voices, apparently in the vaulted passage by which he had entered, suspended his design.

Retreating suddenly into this passage, the voices became much more loud and distinct; and that some individuals were about to descend, by the winding steps, into the cavern, no doubt could, for a moment, be entertained.

Willing, if possible, to ascertain their number, as well as what description of personages he had to expect, before he shewed himself to them, he took his station in the arched passage which branched

off to his right, from whence he believed he should discover who entered from the copse, without being immediately seen himself.

He had scarcely taken his position, when the following words, in shrill discordant tones, though evidently softened down as much as possible by the speaker, who, probably, did not design that they should be heard by any one beyond his own party, distinctly reached his ears:—

"It was very unfortunate—I had been watching him some time. My plaguy pistol, from the dampness of the night, missed fire within a yard of his head, or I had done his business before this time—we may be more successful now—I am sure that I saw him enter. The door being open also, confirms what I say. The moment you behold him—fire. I will do the same. D——n him, he little suspected just now that he was deliberately walking to his own burial. No hesitation—death to him, remember

security to us—now then, be firm, and follow me!"

The Lieutenant had heard enough to be satisfied that he was the object on whose destruction they were bent, and how to escape their fury he knew not.

Retiring further into the arch, he now heard the footsteps of several persons slowly descending; when, uncertain of ultimate relief by so doing, he pursued that direction in the dark to which chance had led him.

This passage, though narrower than the former, he found extended to a considerable distance; but how great was his pleasure and surprise, when, in the end, he found himself emerging from the subterraneous abode, by an opening just large enough to admit one person to squeeze himself through, at the base of a hill, and totally free from the copse, which now appeared in the gloom to his left.

That he should be pursued, he did not

for an instant doubt, and his only safety he felt was in immediate flight.

*THE PURSUIT*

he anticipated, from an encreased rustling which was presently heard in the wood, he was soon satisfied, had already commenced.

The inclement horrors of the night had, by this time, almost entirely abated; a few twinkling stars bespangled the horizon to the south, and the rays of the waning moon were also perceptible. A brisk wind, however, yet prevailed; but the rain had ceased, and darkness no longer hid surrounding objects from the steady gaze.

Not choosing to ascend the steep, on the base of which he stood, the Lieutenant shaped his course, with all the speed he could command, round an angle of the copse, to take the skirts of another

ascen

ascent, which, he conceived would lead him into a track better known to him, and ultimately enable him to regain the Lodge.

Scarcely, however, had he cleared the projecting angle of the wood, when

*A RUFFIAN*

rushed upon him, from some thick bushes, but a little in advance, who, without uttering a word, levelled a pistol to destroy him.

The Lieutenant now resolutely brandished his bludgeon—the villain, too agitated to take a correct aim, fired, but missed his object, when a tremendous blow from the soldier's staff laid him senseless on the earth.

Happy thus to have escaped, the Lieutenant, neither to assist the wretch, nor repeat the blow, halted for a moment—he feared the intrusion of others, and lost no time in hastening from the spot.

Pursuing the course he had at first designed to take, he continued to hurry on for some time. A natural propensity, at length, to discover if any one was following him, induced him to look back; when, crossing one of the hills to his right, he indistinctly beheld two or three persons, apparently endeavouring, by a short cut, to reach a valley beyond him, which, as being more easy than the shelving soil on either side of it, he had intended to pass through.

This timely discovery, however, induced him to turn briskly off in a direction immediately opposite; and, after much labour and difficulty, he reached the summit of one of the highest steeps. Taking the whole range of this, he then continued his route until he had passed over several others, not quite so stupendous, trusting in chance only, having no settled point of destination in idea, for his preservation.

The cheerful rays of a taper from the lattice of

*A SOLITARY COTTAGE,*

at length, caught his attention; and, thoroughly exhausted with the fatigue he had endured, he made instantly towards the lowly habitation.

The humble dwelling was obscurely situated in a hollow, on the margin of which a few shrubs and bushes grew, though not in very luxuriant abundance, or in that fanciful variety, to render them grateful to the beholder. The approach to the house, however, was easy, a circumstance more agreeable to the Lieutenant, at the moment, than aught else which distinguished it.

Having bestowed a few gentle taps on the door with his hand, a voice from within speedily enquired his business there, when the Lieutenant replied, that he had unfortunately lost his road in the storm;

had been walking, fruitlessly, for some time, to regain the right path to his dwelling; and concluded with soliciting shelter and protection, till day-break.

The door was opened to his intreaty, and an elderly robust female figure presently appeared before him.

"The night," said she, "has, indeed, been unruly; and your story may, therefore, be correct. I can imagine the distress you must be in, and have not the heart to oppose your admission into my house."

"You need not fear," said the Lieutenant, "that I shall give you cause to regret such an indulgence."

"I don't!" quickly replied the other. "You will find I am not without company; and if you have deceived me, look you to the consequences, for I have the means to punish you. Thus forewarned, if you have the courage, you may now walk in."

Osrick,

Osrick, without hesitation, followed her into a square brick-paved kitchen, of moderate dimensions, in one part of which, round a wood-fire, *sans* grate, were seated four men, habited something between the usual manner of the labouring peasantry, and seafaring individuals; a blue jacket, with a canvas frock thrown over it, being the costume of each.

As he entered they rose, and offered him a seat among them, which he thought it prudent to accept; nor was he less backward in partaking of part of a flaggon of ale, which was soon after presented to him.

His company now, without taking farther notice of him, continued

*A CONVERSATION*

among themselves, which had probably been commenced sometime ere he arrived, and which was to the following effect.

"Are you certain," was addressed to

one of them, "that old Grassingly was there himself?"

"Quite certain," was the reply, "for I know him as well as I know you, though I don't like him above half as well. There is a something or other worth finding out in that quarter, depend on it."

"How long is it since the old curmudgeon's niece kicked the bucket?"

"Report says six months—but I have my doubts——"

"Doubts of what?"

"No matter. Look to the copse—it is not long since he sold an estate adjoining to that place, you know, but he refused to part with that, though considerably beyond its value was offered for it!"

"Well, and what then?"

"And what then! Don't I know that he is such a muckworm, that he would almost part with the little flesh he has on his bones for gold; and 'tisn't likely, therefore, that he'd keep such a place as the copse to himself, when such an offer

as

as he refused was made to purchase it, had he not some very particular reasons for so doing."

"I was once, I think, very nearly making some kind of a discovery there myself," now remarked a third, "and could I have traced the light I saw to its source, I had no doubt done it. As it was, I was obliged to retreat with a broken head, as you have before heard me mention, and was nothing the wiser for the punishment I received."

"I have heard dreadful groans there, at midnight," observed a fourth, "and have told old Grassingly so more than once; and who, in consequence, has more than once d——d me for a liar, and bade me neither to trouble him or the copse in future, if I wished to preserve my bones entire, and in a whole skin. I could tell him, however, that I have had an eye on him for some time, notwithstanding the advice he gave me, but that I mean to convey the information to him.

more forcibly than it can possibly be done by word of mouth."

"Psha!" exclaimed the female who had admitted the Lieutenant, "none of your braggadocio threats here. You are one of those who let your tongue run upon all occasions. The gentleman," looking at Osrick, "may be a relation of 'Squire Grassingly, for aught you know, and it may not be very pleasant to him to hear his friend abused!"

The Lieutenant now thought it necessary for him to speak, which he did, candidly to assure them that he was totally unacquainted with the person in question.

From the commencement of their discourse, in his presence, Osrick conjectured that the copse he had so recently escaped from, was the place to which they alluded. This conversation, therefore, without their being aware of it, interested him much; and he felt himself not at all gratified by the interruption which

which it had received. A renewal of it he earnestly wished; but the conduct of the female would not admit of his being, in this particular, indulged; for, to his words, she immediately replied:—

"Well, well, after what has passed, I am not sorry to hear you say so, for I do not wish that any stranger should be insulted under my roof. But come, lads," she continued, turning to the others, "do you know the time o'the night? or do you intend to preach nonsense until daylight?"

"How's the weather, Madge?" now enquired one of them?

"At least," briskly replied Madge, "as smooth as your manners; therefore, you may turn out, and fear not that its operations can do much injury to your temper!"

"But you know, Madge," rejoined the other, "that I have some distance to walk; and such another soaking as the

storm has given me to-night, would not be mighty agreeable."

"Cease your chattering, you bear," said Madge; "the weather is fine enough for a better man than you to walk in; therefore trudge it, or you may have cause to repent your obstinacy."

The whole of them now arose to depart, when Madge, turning to the Lieutenant, observed, that she believed she could find a spare bed for him, if he preferred continuing there, agreeably to his first expressed design, until day returned.

The Lieutenant scarcely knew what to reply. He liked not the appearance of the individuals who were about to withdraw; they might take the opportunity of maltreating and robbing him; and some of them, he fancied, eyed him with that attention which boded him no good; and seemed anxious to learn his determination. To retire with them, he thought hazardous; and he was totally ignorant of

of the direct road to the Lodge. If he could rely on their honesty, they might assist him in his dilemma, should he leave the cottage with them; but they might deceive him, and, when too late, he might have occasion to reproach himself for placing any dependence on the words of individuals, whose appearances were so much against them. That



was sole mistress of the dwelling, he had but little doubt; and that the others knew it to be their interest not to disoblige, but to obey her, he had had sufficient proof. There was a roughness in her manner, he thought, which seemed entirely destitute of deceit; though, at the same time, her countenance exhibited those strong marks of ferocity, which, in a female, are highly disgusting, and even terrible to contemplate. She appeared to have numbered about sixty years; but her

her person was still athletic, the infirmities incidental to age, having made but little encroachments to imbecile the nerve, and weaken the powers of vigorous nature. Her dress was homely; and was wrapped about her potent limbs with so little art, that, in an instant, an observer was convinced, the idea of improving her person, by the ornament of apparel, lived not in her mind. Her habiliments, in fact, seemed worn as a mere matter of necessity, that the winds of Heaven might not assail her *delicate* frame too roughly. Her grey eyes, though small, were piercing; and seemed to obtain additional sharpness, from a profusion of red and grey locks, which, from a greasy mob, whose antiquity of make might have raised a smile on the hard features of the most grovelling antiquary, covered a very large proportion of her face; which, by the scorching sun, that had so often kissed it, its fairness, if fair it ever had been, was tinged to a hue of bright

bright and shining copper, rendering more unpleasantly prominent those lines, the index of the mental volume, which nature and habit had affixed there.

After a moment's hesitation, the Lieutenant, therefore, as being, in his opinion, the least dangerous of the two, accepted of the offer of Madge to continue in the cottage for some time longer, and the others immediately departed.

"Now," said Madge, turning to Osrick, "I'll shew you to your room; and the sooner, according to my simple opinion, you get off your damp clothes, the better."

"True," said Osrick, "but once taken off, it is necessary that they should be dried, ere I put them on again."

"Well, well, do you put them on the outside of the door of your room, before you get into bed, and you shall find them quite dry, in the same place, before you want to make use of them again."

"I am much indebted to you for your considerate

considerate kindness, and will cheerfully compensate you for any trouble I may give, ere I leave you."

"Psha! I want no compensation, and you want a bed; therefore, take this candle, and, in the first door to your right, at the top of the stairs, you'll find one; and such a one as I think, at a pinch, may well answer your purpose."

The Lieutenant, taking the candle, ascended the stairs as directed; and, pushing open the door, entered a mean low room on his right.

A stump bedstead, with suitable furniture, occupied the principal space of the apartment, and a latticed window, of small dimensions, immediately fronted the door. One chair, and a common deal table, much the worse for wear, stood between the space of the foot of the bed, and the wall. The table was placed against a worm-eaten door, which appeared either to lead to an adjoining apartment, or a closet, and which failed

not instantly to attract the Lieutenant's notice.

Drawing the chair towards him, he seated himself, and was presently busied in

*RUMINATIONS.*

The singular situation in which he found himself, however, most engrossed his thoughts. Madge, though blunt, even to rudeness, in her manner, and impetuous in her conduct, he imagined was honest. It behoved him, however, to be cautious how he trusted her too far. She had promised to dry his clothes; but he felt no inclination to take them off, to give her that opportunity. It had not been his intention, when he entreated to be admitted into the cottage, to remain in it longer than what he might conceive his safety from pursuit required; and of obtaining a bed in it, was the most distant from his thoughts. The behaviour of

of Madge, however, had induced him to consent to such an accommodation against his real inclination; and which, he now began to imagine, had been rather forced on him, probably for sinister views, rather than from any immediate wish of doing him a service. The company he had found there, he could not persuade himself, could have been there assembled for any possible good—they, however, he knew, were gone—though, that they would not return ere day appeared, he could not be quite so certain of. Madge, a few minutes subsequent to himself, he had heard ascend the stairs, and enter a room, the door of which was opposite to the one in which he was; silence now prevailed below, though a humming noise, such as might proceed from two or more persons cautiously conversing, now and then, he imagined, reached his ears. Thoroughly to be convinced that such was the case, he placed his ear close to the door of the room, which he had shut as he entered,

and

and he was soon satisfied that his conjecture was right.

The voices, he thought, proceeded from the room into which Madge had retired; though no words could he sufficiently distinctly hear to understand their import.

It was plain, however, as he, at first, had erroneously conceived, that Madge was not the sole inhabiter of the dwelling; and his apprehensions, consequently, that some unfair play was intended, perhaps to plunder, if not to murder him, began to multiply.

A thousand times he regretted that he had left the Lodge without his pistols; but regret could not furnish him with weapons, or he had not remained unarmed.

The door which he had noticed as soon as he had entered the room, he again turned his attention toward. He presently removed the table which stood against it, and raising a wooden latchet, very

very easily opened it; when a hard substance, with some little noise, rolled into the room—*it was a human skull!* The incident surprised and startled him. Speedily, however, recovering himself, he took the candle, for the purpose of examining what species of place it was to which the door led. It was a closet of moderate dimensions, on the floor of which stood

*A COFFIN;*

cased with black cloth, and ornamented in the usual way, the lid lying loosely on it. He started! It was strange, he thought; and a variety of sombre conjectures crowded on his mind. An intuitive impulse, at length, propelled him more closely to examine it. He, consequently, holding the candle immediately over it with one hand, pushed the lid aside with the other. Horror chilled the blood at his heart, when

*A CORPSE,*

A CORPSE,

the eyes half open, the cheeks apparently much swelled and disfigured, exhibiting a variety of colours, probably the effect of violent bruises the body not stripped, a red waistcoat and a blue spotted neckcloth being conspicuous, met his sight!

Hastily withdrawing from the terrific spectacle, he closed the door, having previously removed the skull which first attracted his attention, with his foot, to the other side of it.

That the shocking object which the coffin contained had been deprived of life by foul assassination, he could not, for an instant, doubt. Yet that he, Osrick, should be put into the room to make such a discovery, was truly extraordinary; and evinced, that though Madge might be of a disposition sufficiently sanguinary, to be accessary to murder, she was destitute

of

of the art to keep the crime concealed. Or, probably, it was not intended that he should leave the place alive, to publish what there he might behold.

*SUSPICIONS,*

dismal and depressing, now occupied the regions of thought, and bade him beware of danger. Yet what was he to do? He was totally unarmed; and, of course, incompetent to resist the united attack of two or more ruffians, properly accoutred for the deed, who, for what little property he had about him, might determine to destroy him. Nay, he might fall an easy prey to one only, for a pistol-shot accomplished its errand too quickly for the most resolute and collected to stay its progress, or be proof against its power. An escape, ere suspicions of his danger could be supposed to have generated in his mind by the inhabiters of the miserable place, promised only to save him;

yet

yet how was that to be contrived? for the structure was so small, and the apartments, consequently, so closely connected, that not a movement of his could be made but must be heard by all within it: and that there were more than the hag who had deceived him, the humming sounds which still reached him, sufficiently manifested. Advancing closer to the door, Osrick again listened to the interlocutors. Their words, more distinctly than before, vibrated on his ear, particularly the following:—

"*Impossible—he may wake, and—bloody deed accomplished—murder—security—done quickly—buried in the morning—I'll do't, myself—it must be—when sleep overpowers him—tell no tales—all then will be secure.*"

Osrick shuddered! he thought he had heard enough, to satisfy himself that it was their intention to assassinate him, when overpowered by the gentle god of sleep. should he adventure to court and

obtain repose. Happily, however, he had been timely warned of danger, at least to prevent such a silent catastrophe, and attempt

*AN ESCAPE.*

Retiring from the door, he fixed his eyes on the latticed window; and, the next moment, gently approached it. It was not secured, and was large enough for one person, with a trifling effort, to pass through. With the slightest noise he opened it; and found it looked upon one part of the margin of the excavation in which the cottage stood, and which he could touch with his hand.

If this, thought the Lieutenant, is indeed the abode of assassins, it is singularly surprising they should adopt no measures to prevent those from escaping, whom chance or circumstance might cast within their power; and that the occupiers of the dwelling were of that inhuman species

species of miscreants, the bleeding body he had seen, and the words of horrid import he had heard, but too unequivocally evinced.

Without hesitation, therefore, as he found he could release himself that way, he squeezed himself through the window; though more than once alarmed during the transaction, lest Madge should detect him in what he was doing, by quitting her apartment, to possess herself of such articles of his apparel as she had promised to dry for him, ere he might need them again.

At length, finding himself at liberty, the Lieutenant did not loiter on the spot, but moved away with as much precipitation as he could command. The storm had now completely subsided; though the night continued so very cloudy and dark, that had he been better acquainted with the geography of the place than he was, he must have found it extremely difficult to have pursued the right

and nearest route to the Lodge. Keeping a direction, therefore, such as he conceived a right one, he continued, at a brisk pace, to move on; and, after crossing hill and dale, and enduring a very fatiguing journey of nearly three hours, the lights from the windows of Somerton Lodge, he, with indescribable pleasure, beheld diffuse their happy rays to cheer him.

On reaching the mansion, neither his father, nor any of the family, he found, had retired to rest, but were all enduring much anxiety on his account. Mr. Belmont, he learned, had been there some hours, and was with the family in the drawing-room; to which place the Lieutenant very speedily repaired, his father and Mrs. Somerton meeting him on the stairs.

"Dear Osrick," exclaimed his father, as soon as he saw him, "where have you been? We have, for some time, been, indeed, very uneasy on your account.

Belmont

Belmont too, from the situation in which he was compelled to leave you, could offer no consolation, but has partaken of our distress. My dear boy, what has happened, to keep you so long from home?"

"Dear Osrick," exclaimed Mrs. Somerton, preventing the Lieutenant's replying to his father's words, "how could you adventure out in such weather? Bless me, you appear ill through fatigue! What has happened to keep you out so long?"

"Thank God, that which I have happily survived," said Osrick, smiling as he spoke. "I have made my retreat good at last," he continued, "though I assure you it has not been without danger and difficulty. I would tell you the whole of my adventures, but that I am too tired to begin; and, with your permission, I will, therefore, postpone the recital of them until the morning. My

damp clothes, also, sit very unpleasantly on me."

A warm bed and repose, with a previous moderate proportion of spirits, diluted with warm water, being recommended to him by Mrs. Somerton, he consented instantly to profit by her advice; and was presently after in his chamber.

Osrick was too exhausted, on having recourse to his pillow, to yield immediately to the gentle influence of sleep; and his mind was too occupied in thinking of his late perplexities, to lose the recollection of them very suddenly. Busied in

*REFLECTIONS,*

which elucidated nothing certain, he, therefore, continued for some time. The copse, thought he, I will visit again; but it shall not be during the silent moments and danger of night. That his life had been

twice

twice attempted there, he doubted not—the pistol, in the first instance, having missed fire; and the miscreant who had levelled a second at him, his aim. The dampness of the weather, in the first instance, had certainly preserved him; though but for the inclemency of the night, which had forced him thither, he had not incurred the danger. The *cavern*, from which he had so miraculously released himself, he thought of with astonishment; and that some person was there concealed, much against his will, what he had there heard would not admit of a doubt; and which he hoped, at some future period, not very distant, fully to ascertain, and, to the public, disclose. A visit to the exterior of the copse, the next day, he felt, would be grateful to him—the more so, as it would enable him, probably, to discover if the person with whom he had met in contact in crossing the temporary bridge, had, or had not, really

perished by the rencontre. His thoughts next dwelt on the mysterious cottage he had entered subsequently, and on his reception, and discoveries there. That murder had been there committed upon some unfortunate unsuspecting individual, whom the misfortunes of chance might have directed that way, every circumstance tended to corroborate. The rough appearance of the men to whom he had been introduced by Madge, the words he had after overheard, all confirmed his suspicions; and, at the same time, convinced him that a similar treatment had been intended for himself.

The deep damnation which the perpetrators of the horrid crime of

*MURDER*

must incur, brought the following lines of Dryden to his memory:—

"Think,

" Think, timely think, on the last dreadful day,
How you will tremble there, to stand expos'd,
The foremost in the rank of guilty ghosts,
That must be doom'd for murder! think on murder!
That troop is plac'd apart from common crimes;
The damn'd themselves start wide, and shun that band,
As far more black, and more forlorn than they."

Yet was it possible, that in his conjectures on what he had beheld, he could be deceived? He thought not; for

" Who finds the heifer dead, and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?"

Yet suspicion did not amount to certainty; but as

——————— " Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes;
And murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ———"

as such, the deed in question seemed to command his enquiries, and invoke his

revenge. He therefore felt, in the inferences he had drawn from what he had beheld, he could not be deceived. The appearance of the body only, exclusive of other circumstances, was enough to banish doubt, and establish the fact of assassination.

It was plain—the deed spoke for itself, and punishment, dire and certain, to the hellish monsters that had committed it, would follow.

> "The gods are rigid when they weigh such deeds
> As speak a ruthless heart; they measure blood
> By drops, and bate not one in the repay."

Thus busied in reflections, the reviving opiate of sleep was, for some time, denied to him. Forgetfulness, however, at length, overtook him, and he fell into a kind of broken slumber; from which, as he awoke, acute pains he felt in his chest, and much difficulty in respiring. Somewhat alarmed, he rang the bell. The family, as the sun was some hours high,

had been stirring in the mansion some time, so that his summons soon brought a servant to his bedside. His

*ILLNESS*

being made known, a visit from his father was the consequence, and a physician was presently after sent for. A severe cold, from being so long in his damp clothes the night before, which had affected and inflamed the lungs, the Doctor, on his arrival, ascertained to be the malady of which he complained. Loss of blood was therefore instantly advised; and after to keep himself as quiet as possible for the remainder of the day.

The Lieutenant, however, though bleeding, at first, gave him some relief, continued hourly to get worse; a raging fever ultimately seized him, and his life was considered in the most imminent danger.

In short, for three weeks the Lieu-

tenant was confined to his bed, during which time but very little hope could be entertained of his eventual recovery.

At the end of the third week, however, the natural soundness of his constitution began to triumph over his malady; and at the end of the fourth he was sufficiently revived to walk about, with assistance, and enjoy the society of his friends.

During his convalescent state, the adventures of the night in which his illness had been contracted, he fully related to his family; whose feelings at the recital may be very easily conceived.

Belmont, he learned, after escaping the fury of the storm, and the menaced danger of the maddened ox, had succeeded in regaining his residence, much better than he had expected he should: where having shifted his damp habiliments for dry, he instantly set off to relate what had happened at the Lodge.

Belmont and the Lieutenant had frequently

quently discoursed on the perils which the latter had escaped, during Osrick's convalescence; and a determination of visiting the copse, and the cottage together, was the result of their conferences, when the Lieutenant's health should be sufficiently re-established, for him to endure the fatigue with safety.

"Poor Annette," said his father to him in one of his visits, as he took a seat by his side, "has lost her aged friend. I have not been neglectful of the poor girl during your illness; but the icy hand of death mortal powers cannot put aside, and it robbed her of her last surviving relative yesterday. When you get somewhat stronger, Osrick, we will visit Annette, and try to devise some plan for her future welfare and support."

"Poor Annette!" said Osrick, "her case is truly pitiable."

The Lieutenant, now, had so far recovered from indisposition, as to be enabled

bled to join the card-parties of an evening, in the drawing-room, which were principally confined to Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, their daughter and niece, Mr. Belmont, and his own family. The young ladies, particularly Alethea, expressed themselves much delighted at Osriok's approaching recovery; and social happiness, and friendly confidence, seemed again to have undisputed dominion at the Lodge.

About six weeks had passed from the date of the commencement of the Lieutenant's illness, when

*A BALL*

at the public rooms in the neighbourhood, being mentioned by Mrs. Stokes as to take place on the following night, it was presently resolved that the whole party should attend.

The Lieutenant, at this time, had nearly regained his health; and as he expressed

pressed no aversion to the recreation proposed, Mr. Somerton wanted no persuasion to fall in with the measure.

On the night following, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Somerton, and the Lieutenant, repaired to the rooms, where they were presently after joined by Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, their daughter and niece, and Mr. Belmont.

The rooms, on this night, happened to be very much crowded; and the dancers, consequently, were very numerous. The master of the ceremonies, however, did not neglect to pay his respects to Mr. Somerton and his friends, as the former had ever cheerfully subscribed his annual guinea to his book.

Belmont and Alethea, the Lieutenant and Miss Stokes, stood up, soon [illegible] to partake of the wholesome and graceful exercise; while Mr. and Mrs. Somerton, Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, were content to be spectators of the amusement, and accordingly

cordingly kept their seats, at one extremity of the room.

At the end of the first dance, they were joined by Mr. Belmont and Alethea; the latter, complaining of the heat, and feeling rather indisposed, sat down; and Mrs. Somerton, at the request of Mr. Belmont, and with a nod of assent from her husband, gave her hand to Mr. Belmont, for the dance which was about to follow.

Mr. Somerton, leaving his party, now took a walk into the card-rooms; and from thence returned, and again took a view of the dancers.

It so happened, that several gentlemen who were making remarks on the individuals present, and endeavouring to amuse each other, no matter at the expence of [illegible] reputation, Mr. Somerton, on his return to the ball-room, placed himself very near to, and, of course, heard the greater part of their conversation; in the course of which were enumerated the following

CHARACTERS.

CHARACTERS.

"That lady's a widow, and the next to her is her daughter—though they appear not to know each other. The young lady has received her instructions from her mamma, and conducts herself accordingly. The widow is turned of forty; and is ashamed to acknowledge a daughter in public, who has already diverged from her teens. The widow has property to some amount; and may be rendered an easy dupe to the first designing sharper who has no objection to take her estate with all encumbrances. Her daughter, freed from the shackles of restraint by the plan laid down to regulate their actions in public, is too flippant to gain either the love or esteem of a man of sense; too poor, being entirely dependant on her mother, for designing knavery to cope with; and, in all probability, will ultimately become the property of some strolling

strolling comedian, if not shortly moved off by her dancing or music-master.—That tall meagre figure on the left was formerly an attorney's clerk; he contrived to write his employer into a prison, and take possession of his business himself. Of his late employer's character, report speaks favourably; but the dastard in question, it is supposed, is making rapid advances for an *honourable* exhibition in the pillory.—That lusty veteran, whose countenance displays the map of honest intrepidity, and genuine worth, is a gallant admiral, who has seen much and honourable service; and had lately a distinguished command on the Sussex coast. Behold, all seem happy at his presence; and there is no deceit in their smiles; for the man who has nobly fought the battles of his country, must be welcome wherever he appears.—The object to the right of the gallant admiral, is an officer of some note in the army. Report speaks favourably of his talents; though,

though, I believe, he has been but little engaged in actual service. His person is manly, and he has acquired something of the air of a soldier. He moves under high patronage; and were he less vain of his good fortune, less affected in his manners, less immerged in the whirlpool of puppyism, in which many of his good qualities are drowned, he would be more respected by the rational part of society, be more worthy of the notice of his patron, and of the honourable post he holds.—That bloated figure, who has just taken his seat on the sofa in the east angle of the room, is a corn-factor, *a rogue in grain*, who, if permitted, would simplify the art of regrating, and endeavour to prove that an extended system of monopoly is for the real benefit of a state. The immense fortune he has acquired by his nefarious practices, has reduced many an honest family from a competence and respectability, to loathsome indigence: but that affects him not; he can smile,

though

though conscience whisper to him, that he moves not but within a humid circle produced by the tears of the anguished poor.—That curious figure yonder has the finest nose in the world. He can smell the dinner-hour of a friend, though he should reside a league from him. He gives no dinners himself, though he is constantly an obtruding guest at the tables of others. He will speak you fairly to your face, and lampoon you in your absence. He is perpetually prying into the secrets of all that come within the retina of his eye, and retails his lutulent gleanings at the price only of callipash and callipee!—The banker yonder, in the uniform of a volunteer corps, knows that two and two make four; but the pert fribble at his elbow, in the same costume, with whom he is speaking, knows nothing else.—Opposite to us is one who was once a man of business, but who now but eats, drinks, sleeps, wakes, thinks, and speaks at the advice of his rib.—To the left of him

him is one that might be thought a divinity, if angels could be imagined poor. She tripped it on the light fantastic toe just now, with a professed libertine, who has since resigned her for the youthful helpmate of a man old enough to be her father; and who, if he has not done it already, which I shrewdly suspect, and I believe I am not singular in my suspicions, intends to give her husband a passport for Cuckold's Haven."

Mr. Somerton heard their latter remarks with mingled astonishment and anger. The man of business alluded to, he saw was his friend Stokes; and the angel to the left of him, Alethea. The libertine was Belmont; and the lady whose reputation was thus scandalously abused, was no other than his wife!

Advancing indignantly to where the oral defamers were standing, he would have addressed them, in terms somewhat abrupt and acrimonious, but the groupe moved

moved at the instant from that part of the room, and the vacancy being speedily filled by others, he presently lost sight of them, and that too ere he had sufficiently noticed their persons, to be enabled, with certainty, to recognise them, should he chance to meet with any of them again.

Though not a word of truth could have been contained in what he had lately heard, the uneasiness it gave him was great and poignant. He was indeed so cut to the soul, that he could almost have interrupted the dancers, by suddenly removing his wife from among them, and with her have instantly left the room. That Belmont was a libertine, he would not dispute; but that his wife, and for such a coxcomb, or for any one, could deceive him, was impossible. The amiableness of her conduct, on all occasions, proved the reverse. But the scorpion seeds of

had been sown in his heart—had, almost unknown to himself, taken root there; the growth of which might check, if not eventually destroy, that rich harvest of social confidence, which he had hoped, fondly hoped, mutually to reap with his wife, as the stay, the support, and comfort of his latter years.

Though at the instant he felt convinced of the virtue of his unoffending wife, his eyes now watched her every action. She was still the partner of Belmont in the dance; and the looks which Belmont bestowed on her, he now fancied possessed the tenderness, the warm villainy of design, whose end it was to make him wretched; and *those looks*, he more than half persuaded himself, were answered by others from his wife, which encouraged a repetition of the like.

"Trifles

——— "Trifles light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmation strong,
As proofs of holy writ."

.....

——— "Of all
Our passions, I wonder Nature made
The worst, foul jealousy, her favourite;—
And if it be not so, why took she care
That every thing should give the monster nourishment,
And left us nothing to destroy it with?"

.....

"Thou wond'rous yellow fiend!
Temper an antidote with antimony,
And 'tis infectious: Mix jealousy with marriage,
It poisons virtue: Let the child feel the sting,
He'll fly the honeycomb: Has she one action
That can dispose you to distrust?"

.....

The more Mr. Somerton strove to dispossess himself of his suspicions, the more his mind was tortured with dread surmises. From their earliest acquaintance to the present time, he reasoned with himself, the conduct of Mrs. Somerton

merton had been irreproachable. Her only apparent care, since their union, had been to make him happy—to make *his* will her own. No amusements had she partaken of, but of *his* recommending—no wish expressed, on any occasion, that a temporary recreation should be by *her* enjoyed, unshared by *him*—*her* pleasure had seemed to exist but in *his* smiles, and in the fondest attentions, to make him sensible of the just conceptions she had of the debt of gratitude, in the comparative splendour he had raised her to, she owed him. But then, was it not possible, that though *gratitude* thus excited her attentions to him, that *love*, mighty love, might have favourably disposed her towards Belmont? Belmont had been often at the Lodge—for many weeks past had been almost a daily guest there; and, with Mrs. Somerton, had enjoyed many *tête-à-tête* uninterrupted. A thousand recollections now haunted him, of the pleasure she had seemed to derive from

his visits; of the time she had cheerfully devoted to him; and, at their partings, of the many pressing invitations she had given him to call again: yet, until that moment, that her conduct had been regulated by an impure motive, he had never once suspected. The innocent gaiety of her disposition, which, at times, he had observed, now flitted across his memory, distracted his brain, and bade the fiend Doubt inhabit there.

"O Jealousy! thou bane of pleasing friendship!
Thou worst invader of our tender bosoms!
How does thy rancour poison all our sweetness,
And turn our gentle nature into bitterness!"

The dance had now ended; and Mr. Somerton beheld Belmont lead his wife to a seat, and soon after leave her, to place himself near to Alethea. It is well! thought Mr. Somerton, though even this may be the effect of design! Could he not have continued near her? or did Prudence whisper him that in the husband's

band's presence he should be so circumspect, that the treachery he was competent to execute might not be detected? Belmont, at the instant, quitted Alethea, and took a seat near Mrs. Somerton. So thought Mr. Somerton; his leaving her in the first instance, then, was but a feint, probably to hide suspicion; and the vacant seat he had at last taken, might have been preserved for him by his wife. Tortured and tired with conjectures, which, after all, might have no foundation in truth, Mr. Somerton came to the resolution of narrowly watching, on all occasions, the conduct of his wife; and, so far as it related to *her's*, Belmont's. If I have been the dupe of either, thought he, my future vigilance may confirm their licentious intercourse, and guide my arm to vengeance. If they are innocent, the pain I at present feel can injure no one but myself, for to no one shall it be disclosed. What I have heard may be a lie —an infamous wicked lie—but it *shall* be

ascertained, and future discoveries direct my energies and judgment.

Resolving to act as if nothing had occurred to hurt his feelings, he now made towards Mrs. Somerton, who arose to meet him as she saw him approach. Belmont did the same, politely making him an offer of his seat. A sort of confusion Mr. Somerton imagined was visible in the manner of Belmont, and of which he was more than half persuaded, his wife partook. The proffered seat of Belmont he declined accepting; and, as many of the company at the instant gave up their places to join in the merry dance, or to parade the room, after desiring of Mrs. Somerton to return to her former seat, he embraced the opportunity of placing himself between his friend Stokes and Alethea.

Mr. Somerton, though he endeavoured to hide his chagrin, and appear cheerful, found the task too painfully difficult to accomplish. Mr. Stokes presently noticed his

his unusual gravity; and Alethea tenderly enquired if he were ill? Mr. Somerton, forcing a smile, replied, that he never felt himself better; and that if any symptoms to the contrary could be discovered in him, they were totally unknown to himself.

This, for the moment, satisfied the interrogators; but the rankling in the heart of Mr. Somerton continued the same.

Until this evening, he knew not what it was to be unhappy; and his grief was beyond the art of human solace—beyond, because he dared not disclose it; and he could derive no consolation from his own thoughts.

The company at length began to retire from the rooms. It was somewhat past midnight. Mr. Somerton was informed that his carriage was at the door; when taking leave of Mr. Stokes and his family, and bowing formally to Belmont, with Mrs. Somerton and the Lieutenant, with-

drew, and shortly after in safety reached the Lodge.

The next morning, as the family trio, at rather a late hour, were seated at

*THE BREAKFAST-TABLE,*

the amusements of the preceding night naturally became the topic of their discourse. Mr. Somerton, whose thoughts, even to the deprivation of rest, during the greater part of the night, had been busily employed upon the incidents that had occurred to pain him in the ball-room, appeared unusually absent and pensive. Mrs. Somerton had noticed a difference in his behaviour towards her, even before they had left the rooms the night before, but being unconscious of having done any thing to merit his reproach, she attributed the sudden alteration in his manner to a trifling indisposition, which the heat of the evening might have occasioned, and which, she trusted,

trusted, would not be visible in the morning.

Convinced, at this time, that a something dwelt in his mind, to interrupt the even current of his temper, more than she at first had suspected, she adventured tenderly to interrogate him on the subject; but the reply which she received was laboured, formal, and reserved! It was of that description which, to the sensitive mind of Mrs. Somerton, indicated that she was the cause of the gloom which hung upon his spirits. It was not the words, but the manner in which they were uttered, that contained the accusation.

The Lieutenant looked surprised. He had not noticed the previous difference in the demeanour of his father, that had excited Mrs. Somerton's interrogation; therefore the frigidity of the answer to it forcibly struck him.

At this instant, a servant announced Mr. Belmont. Mr. Somerton looked

steadfastly at his consort, who, probably, supposing that such an addition to their party would operate to raise the spirits of her husband, with a quickness of expression rather unusual with her, desired that Mr. Belmont might be admitted.

Mr. Somerton bit his lip, but said nothing.

Belmont entered. Mr. Somerton, almost at the same instant, rose from his seat, and left the room.

Belmont did not appear to notice the sudden departure of Mr. Somerton; but, seating himself, entered into a desultory conversation with Mrs. Somerton and the Lieutenant.

Nothing was said by either of them respecting the sudden change which had been observed in the temper and conduct of Mr. Somerton. Mrs. Somerton's thoughts, however, occasionally appeared to diverge that way, and her spirits now became visibly depressed.

Had Mr. Belmont not joined them, in the

the absence of his father, the Lieutenant certainly would have interrogated her on the subject, as the words, and more particularly the manner, of his father, he was convinced, originated in a something that had occurred to offend him; though of what complexion that something was, he had not the sagacity to comprehend.

Belmont, as usual, was loquacious, and not altogether unentertaining. The common incidents of the ball the night before, became, in rotation, the subject of his unconstrained animadversion; and many a worthy character was satirized, and held up to ridicule, not from a motive of ill-nature, but merely to excite risibility in his auditors, and in which he now and then succeeded.

*ANECDOTE*

ultimately was resorted to for diversion; among which the following, which had been related to him by a military charac-

ter, the evening preceding, at the ball, who had witnessed the affair, proved one of the most singular and interesting.

When the British were in possession of some part of

*ST. DOMINGO,*

it was there reported, that a baker in the island had mixed poison with the bread that was to be distributed to the English forces.

This rumour happily obtained that degree of credit which it merited; the fact was ascertained ere any of the bread had been divided amongst the troops; and the horrid calamity which otherwise might have been produced, was thereby prevented.

To bring the delinquent to punishment, was now the just and general wish of the army; and a detachment of cavalry was consequently dispatched to surround his residence, and secure his person.

*THE*

*THE CULPRIT,*

not being apprized of the discovery that had been made, was easily taken; and walking him between their horses, the soldiers were soon seen conducting him to their commander.

That he should escape from so formidable an escort, appeared impossible; but difficult as such a measure seemed, he effected it in the following manner:—

Guilt had already whispered to him the real cause of his apprehension; and that nothing short of death would be his punishment, should he be brought to trial, (for the English, he was convinced, would not destroy him unheard), he was not slow in anticipating.

He therefore speedily determined to make a desperate effort to free himself from the soldiery, though he knew it must be done at the extreme hazard of being cut down by their sabres.

Thus resolved, in passing some houses in their way, as he was not confined to the trappings of any of the dragoon's horses, he suddenly darted from behind some of them, and under the heads of others, crossing to, and entering one of the buildings. The sabres of the dragoons were fruitlessly aimed at his life: all of them dropped short of their object. With suitable celerity, however, various of them dismounted, and pursued him into the house where he had fled for refuge.

It so happened, that the lower part of the dwelling into which the diabolical miscreant had entered, was also used as a baker's shop; the proprietor of which became so extremely alarmed at the sudden and rapid approach of the military, that, suspecting he had himself done a something to bring the fury of their resentment upon him, (not having observed the man enter his premises whom they were pursuing), he made an effort to escape

escape them, through the medium of the window. It was evening, but he was presently discovered, and secured by the soldiers without, who, believing him to be the very person that had previously fled from them, announced his recapture to their comrades, all of whom returned from the house, remounted their horses, and set off with him, without discovering their mistake.

The next morning the supposed delinquent was tried by

*A COURT-MARTIAL,*

at the drum-head. His protestations of innocence were useless; the corroborative proofs of his guilt were apparently too strong, to admit of any doubts on the subject; and, in the result, he was sentenced, as the crime was of so damnable a description, to be fixed to the muzzle of a cannon, and his body scattered in atoms in the air.

The

The court-martial was no sooner at an end, than preparations commenced for the execution. The military, in solemn array, were presently drawn out to witness his death; and the trembling victim, fast bound with cords, convulsed with fear and horrid expectation, at the muzzle of

*A TWELVE-POUNDER,*

awaited his doom.

The signal was at length given—the sparkling fuze was raised to discharge the gun—a shriek of terror from the wretched man pierced the air—and the tremendous explosion the next instant shook the earth.

Silence, solemn and complete, now, for an instant, prevailed.

As the smoke began to clear away, and the gun could once more be distinctly seen, the astonishment which pervaded all present, words are inadequate to express,

press, for unhurt, even in the slightest degree, the trembling object they had intended to destroy, was yet standing in the identical position in which he had been placed!

The first effect of the general surprise being somewhat diminished, an officer advanced to the wretched captive—"I am innocent!" he exclaimed. "God knows my innocence, and has saved me; then, for the sake of God, seek not to injure an innocent man, but lend him your protection and support."

The officer was too affected to reply.

On examination, it was found that the cords which confined him had not been drawn so sufficiently tight, but that, in his convulsive agonies, the man, as the fuze was about to be applied for his destruction, had an opportunity of twisting himself to the right of the muzzle of the gun, and, thereby, of preserving his life.

Such

Such a miraculous escape, however, could but be considered, at the instant, as a singular intervention of Providence to save the guiltless. The execution was delayed; the error of the military, the next day, was discovered; the real delinquent was eventually detected, tried, and executed; and the whole army rejoiced in the deliverance of an innocent man.*

The *dejeune*, at length, concluded; Belmont proposed a ride to the Lieutenant, who, as the weather was favourable, readily agreed to the proposition, and the horses were presently at the door.

This was the first time that the Lieutenant had adventured to take



* This event, singular as it may appear, on the authority of an officer of probity and honour in the British army, who was present on the occasion, I have been assured, did occur at St. Domingo, as above stated.

AN AIRING

on horseback, since his illness; to the coppice, therefore, he determined to pay a visit, and in which he was cheerfully accompanied by Belmont.

Though they knew of no direct road to the place in question, yet Osrick, recollecting the manner in which he had formerly stumbled on it, they crossed the downs from the Lodge, and with little difficulty, reached the secluded spot they sought.

The temporary bridge, crossing the ditch, which, from the accident that had happened there, had often been uppermost in the Lieutenant's thoughts, was now among the first objects that struck his attention. The ditch he found was but of very moderate depth; so moderate, in fact, that he conceived it impossible that an accident so fatal as he had once apprehended,

apprehended, could have happened there. This circumstance afforded him pleasure, and he did not hesitate to disclose what he felt to his companion.

Crossing the ditch, they advanced to the coppice; but no opening could there be perceived, by which an individual, even on foot, could gain admission to its interior parts, but with much difficulty and labour. The underwood grew immensely thick, and the numerous branches of the taller shrubs and trees were so closely entwined, apparently more by art than nature, that it required a task of some pain as well as perseverance, to force a passage through them. Yet Osrick was certain that he was not far from the spot by which he had been admitted into the wood on a former occasion, though no sign of an opening could then, in any place, be perceived.

Moving gently on, they, in the end, passed quite round the coppice, which was not

not of any very great extent, discovering that it was equally secured on all sides, no opening or avenue of any description leading to those secret recesses of it which chance had formerly given the Lieutenant an opportunity of entering, being visible; neither could any trace be discovered of the entrance of that subterraneous passage which he formerly had explored.

After many fruitless endeavours to discover the subterraneous passage which led to the mystic cavern in the wood, the two friends quitted the place, with a determination of paying a visit to the cottage on the downs, and of having some very serious discourse with its inhabitant—Madge.

In their latter pursuit, as in the former, they were equally fated to be disappointed—no vestige of a cottage of the description they sought, was to be found, though several hollows they perceived on the hills, in which such a building might

might have been, but nothing that could positively indicate to them that there ever had.

The Lieutenant's regret at his unexpected disappointments, was excessive—he recapitulated his adventures during the night of the storm, in which they had been both sufferers, to Belmont, not forgetting minutely to dwell on the particulars of that conversation he had listened to when seated by the fire, in the habitation of his quondam friend, Madge; and which terminated in an expressed desire to find out the residence of Grassingly, pay him a *sans ceremonie* visit, and trust to circumstance to furnish them with an excuse as an apology for such an intrusion.

Belmont's assent to the measure being obtained, they turned their horses, and, at a brisk rate, once more made for the coppice. Neither of them were acquainted with Grassingly, nor his residence; but if what the Lieutenant had heard in the cottage of Madge could at all be relied on,

on, his dwelling could not be far situated from the coppice in question.

Passing the wood, therefore, and descending a valley but a short distance from it, they, at length, came up to

*A LONE HOUSE;*

its roof was thatched, and black and green with years. In front of it was a small inclosure, which, apparently, had formerly been cultivated as a kitchen-garden, but which was now completely choaked with weeds, and presented no symptoms of the agents of industry having been employed therein of late days. Four windows had formerly opened from the house upon this little inclosed spot, the fence of which was fast crumbling to decay, but three of the windows had been barricadoed with dirty planks, &c. from without, which were nailed to the window-frames; and the glass of the fourth appeared to have lost its transparency,

rency, in the incrustations of dirt on th respective panes.

"This may be the residence of some poor peasant," said the Lieutenant, "who may have it in his power to direct us to that of Grassingly; though, from its gloomy and decayed appearance, one would scarcely suppose it to be the habitation of a human being."

"In truth," replied Belmont, "I do not suppose it to be the habitation of any one—that it has been, its being here evinces—but in its present state, the most abject children of poverty would scarcely make it their home."

"At any rate," remarked the Lieutenant, "there can be no harm in removing our doubts;"—striking the railed fence with the butt-end of his whip as he spoke, to summon those within, if any such there were, to the door.

That part of the fence on which the whip alighted, too rotten to bear the shock, snapped short of, and dropped at his

his horse's feet, the door of the house being gradually opened at the same time, and a figure,

*AN EMBLEM OF FAMINE,*

his eyes being deeply sunken in their sockets, the cheek-bones ghastly prominent, the mouth wide, the nose contracted, and the whole countenance of a cadaverous complexion, presented himself. On his head he wore a red and blue striped woollen cap. No cravat wore he round his neck, which was lean and shrivelled, and of the same cadaverous hue as his face. His habiliments hung loosely on his withered limbs, and were composed of a variety of patches, in which not one in the whole collection appeared to have its fellow.

The Lieutenant started with disgust at beholding him, and Belmont was similarly affected.

"What

"What is your business here? and why am I thus disturbed, and my property mutilated and destroyed?" at length shrieked a voice, in a sharp discordant treble. "Who will repair the damage you have done? You daring vile intruders, is my house to be pulled down about my ears, and my grounds made a thoroughfare for knaves? and with impunity! but tarry awhile—I have those within shall teach you better manners, and chastise your presumption."

"Be not angry, old gentleman," mildly answered Osrick; "any damage that I incautiously have committed, I will cheerfully pay the reparation of. I halted not here to offend, but merely to have an enquiry answered, that might enable me to find the place I seek."

"O! is that all? you will pay the damage, will you?" in a tone equally discordant, but considerably less loud than his former, observed the miserable object

of

of *shreds and patches*—"Why I doubt if the enormous sum of twenty shillings will more than satisfy my demand!"

"Nor shall it," said Osrick; "for behold, here is

*A GUINEA*,"

taking one from his pocket, and extending it towards him as he spoke—"I knew we should be fortunate enough to part friends."

Attracted by the sight of the guinea, like a needle within the influence of the resistless magnet, he sprung towards the extended arm of the Lieutenant; a grin of exultation making his countenance more hideous, as he felt it drop into his hand. The moment after, fixing his eyes upon the piece of gold, he respired—"Welcome, welcome, thrice welcome to a friend, who too well knows thy value very soon to part with thee! Oh that I had a million such, and all alike, to gaze

or appropriated to aught but just and honourable purposes."

"Were you really in want of a guinea," enquired Belmont, "that the mere sight of one gave you so much pleasure?"

"I am always in want of guineas," he replied; "aught else I can do without; the sight of them almost feeds me when I am hungry; and it never fails to sooth me into good humour with myself, when the world frowns upon me. With guineas I can do without the dainties that devour the guineas; for so long as the earth produces roots that fatten, and give wholesome nourishment to the body, and the limpid stream will quench the thirst of man, the inveterate enemy, hunger, may easily be subdued, and the wealth that delights the eye and cheers the heart preserved."

"Is

"Is there really so much pleasure then," said Osrick, "to be derived in beholding that which, in our possession, can neither be serviceable to ourselves nor others? Has gold a virtue in itself which other metals have not? Would the starving wretch in a desert prefer a pound of gold to a pound of mouldy bread, to satisfy his cravings, and prolong his life?"

"A pound of gold!" screamed the other; "prefer a pound of gold to a pound of——Brainless rant!—a pound of gold would——"

"Ease the pangs of death," interrupted Belmont, and waft the spirit to Heaven, I know you would say, though crimes of the deepest dye stained the soul of him who possessed it."

The emotions which Osrick had excited were repeated; and Belmont again laughed aloud.

"It were waste of time longer to converse with you," at length remarked the offended '*sketch and outline of a man,*'

as he retreated to the half-closed door of his miserable dwelling; "you are either fools or madmen, or something worse; begone—you will find it dangerous longer to tarry here; and, do ye mind me, be careful how you trouble me again."

"Answer me one question ere you leave us," quickly said Osrick, "and we will quit your house as you request. A person of the name of Grassingly we would find—we have business of importance with him; direct us how to find his dwelling, and our thanks are your's."

The door which the other was about to close, he now held open (a visible degree of irresolution being in his manner) with his right-hand, supporting himself against the door-case with the left, his head projecting forward, and his eyes being more intently fixed upon Osrick than they had been at any time before.

"Can and will you comply with my request?" exclaimed the Lieutenant.

"With whom did you say you had business

business of importance?" enquired the other, his voice becoming tremulous, and his agitation increasing.

"With a person of the name of Grassingly," said the Lieutenant, "who, I know, resides somewhere hereabouts."

"Of what complexion is your business with him?" asked the other; "it is necessary I should know, lest I commit an act of hostility towards him, by directing an unwished-for individual to his house."

"We only want to pay him some money," laughingly remarked Belmont; "and if he is as fond of guineas as you are, he will thank you for giving us the information we require to find him."

"Money to pay him!" said he, more widely opening the door; "money to pay to whom?"

"Grassingly," repeated Belmont.

"Indeed! upon what account?" eagerly interrogated the astonished stranger.

"Of that, of course, we shall inform him when we meet," said Belmont.

"And pay him the money?" said the other.

"Certainly," from Belmont, was the reply.

"Why then," with an obsequious inclination of the head, added the time-worn figure, "your journey is at an end. I am the man you seek—my name is Grassingly: any sum or sums of money that you may be indebted to me, I shall thankfully receive. Pray dismount, gentlemen, and walk into the house."

Belmont had suspected, from the nature of his latter enquiries, that it was to Grassingly himself that they were speaking, and had, therefore, adopted what he conceived an innocent stratagem, though it was at the expence of truth, to ascertain if his suspicion was correct, and which had been attended with the desired effect. He now turned to the Lieutenant, who, unwilling to lose such an opportunity

nity of conversing farther with Grassingly, had dismounted, to enter the house, and Belmont speedily did the same.

"But how shall we dispose of our horses?" said the Lieutenant.

"Tie the bridle-reins to a branch of that tree," said Grassingly, pointing to the withered trunk and leafless branches of an aged elm, that rose just by; "they will then be at too great a distance to do farther injury to the fence. Unfortunately, Judith, my housekeeper, is from home, or she should mind them for you —nor have I any other person in the way."

The Lieutenant and Belmont looked significantly at each other; both recollecting the former threat of punishment that had been uttered, to be inflicted by those within.

Having secured their horses as advised, they entered

### THE MISER'S DWELLING.

Leading from the door was a passage gloomy and damp, to the right of which they were conducted into a small square room, almost as gloomy as the passage, the only window in front of the house which was not barricadoed, giving light to it, that is, so much as it was permitted to do, by the flakes of dust and dirt which so obstinately adhered to the glass. Two or three half-consumed sticks laid scattered upon a square brick hearth, upon the same level as the floor, which boasted not the convenient ornament of a grate; near to which, in melancholy mood, sat a living mousetrap, a cat, but which was too tamed by famine to heed their approach, or even to notice aught that was passing about her. The ceiling and walls of the room had once been white, but which had been so repeatedly smoked by the sooty

sooty exhalations of the kindled faggots on the hearth, that they had received a dye quite as black as the hearth itself. Four chairs, rickety, and neither scarcely safe to trust the weight of the body on, a worm-eaten deal table, a small iron chest, a rusty iron lamp, filled with foul grease, with some screwed up linen rags in the centre, as a substitute for cotton, a few broken plates, as many rusty knives and forks, two wooden basons, and a brace of pewter spoons, an almanack of at least ten years standing, a dirty ledger, and an hour-glass, constituted the principal furniture of the room.

Having wiped the dust from two of the *splendid* chairs, with the more dusty flap of his coat, Grassingly desired his visitors to be seated, which request, with due caution, lest a fall should be the result, they complied with; their host seating himself upon the lid of the iron chest, which stood conveniently situated for such

a purpose, in one corner of the room, and the following

*DIALOGUE*

commenced, and was continued between them :

*Lieutenant.*—" Your name, I think you told me, is Grassingly?"

*Grassingly.*—"Grassingly is my name."

*Lieutenant.*—" I am afraid, Mr. Grassingly, that my friend has rather deceived you."

*Grassingly.*—"How? When? Where?"

*Lieutenant.*—" But just now."

*Grassingly.*—" What mean you?"

*Lieutenant.*—"I will explain to you what I mean."

*Grassingly.*—" You will much oblige me."

*Lieutenant.*—" My friend here has informed you that my motive in searching for you was to discharge a debt."

*Grassingly.*

*Grassingly.*—"Well, I know he did; and I, consequently, have given you an opportunity of paying the money."

*Belmont.*—"All fair—now then to the point."

*Lieutenant.*—"My name is Somerton;—can you find such a name in your ledger?"

*Belmont.*—"All fair again; you will understand each other presently."

*Grassingly.*—"Some years ago I was so neglectful of my accounts, that the necessary entries I frequently failed to make in my books."

*Lieutenant.*—"There can have been no opportunity between you and me for such an omission, as this, I believe, is the first time we ever met."

*Grassingly.*—"And what am I to understand from such discourse?"

*Lieutenant.*—"Simply this—that as I have contracted no debt with you, I can have none to discharge; consequently I must have another motive for my visit to you,

you, than that you seem to imagine. It is a visit which, I trust, you will, notwithstanding, receive in friendship, when the nature of it is explained to you."

*Grassingly.*—"Then, after all, you have no money to pay me?"

*Lieutenant.*—"I owe you none."

*Grassingly.*—"I am born to suffer disappointments—why did you enter my house?"

*Lieutenant.*—"It was at your own request."

*Grassingly.*—"Fool, fool that I am, to be so credulous! I am the dupe of every one—but I'll be revenged."

*Lieutenant.*—"Why, which of us has injured you?"

*Grassingly.*—"No matter—no matter."

*Belmont.*—"Be easy, old gentleman. If we came not here to pay money, you may believe me when I tell you that we came to take none from you."

*Grassingly.*

*Grassingly.*—"That's some consolation. But your business?"

*Lieutenant.*—"To be brief—"

*Grassingly.*—"Be brief."

*Lieutenant.*—"A singular adventure, a few weeks since, placed me in a very awkward and dangerous situation, in the coppice but a short distance from this house—"

*Grassingly.*—"Eh! What! The coppice—what of the coppice?"

*Lieutenant.*—"My life was twice attempted there!"

The tremblings of Grassingly again returned; a quivering seized his under-jaw; and it was with extreme difficulty that he gave stammering utterance to the following unconnected words:

"Were *you* then the object who—by what means got you—your li-life at-attempted, say you, twice—how got you to the—your li-life attempted in my grounds—impossible!"

*Lieutenant.*—"By Heaven it is true. My

My deliverance from the scene of danger was the most miraculous and singular that can well be imagined. I descended a cave, and by a subterraneous—"

Convulsed with agonizing apprehensions, Grassingly vociferated, or rather screamed—

"It is false—you dared not—on your life, you dared not—was it you then that descended—it is a wilful and a wicked lie."

*Lieutenant.*—"A lie!—Did not your age protect you, I would trample you beneath my feet, for your insolent temerity. Why do you tremble so?"

*Grassingly.*—"Leave my house."

*Lieutenant.*—"Why shake your limbs, as though they would sever from the joints? Why should the blood forsake your cheeks—your lips, and faltering accents mark your speech, if what I uttered had no affinity to truth? and in being true—and that such it is, I pledge my life, and what is dearer to me, my honour,

honour, why should it produce such enervating effects as those which now I notice?"

*Grassingly.*—"Did you co-come here to plun-plunder, or to mur-murder me—or both?"

*Lieutenant.*—"You fear neither."

*Grassingly.*—"I fear both; and in that the cause of my agitation you have discovered."

*Lieutenant.*—"The cause I fain *would* discover; but well am I convinced that it lives not in the fear you affect to entertain of being either corporeally hurt, or plundered by *us!*"

*Grassingly.*—"To what beside can it be rationally attributed?"

*Lieutenant.*—"That, at present, is a secret which rests with yourself, but—"

*Grassingly.*—"Leave my house!"

*Lieutenant.*—"If you persist in such rude conduct, I shall but quit your house, to procure a magistrate's warrant to have *you* apprehended; and the wood which, with

with so much art as well as labour, you have secured, that no one should gain access to it, most accurately examined."

After a severe struggle with his feelings, he ejaculated:—

"A warrant! What crime have I committed?"

*Lieutenant.*—"Ask your own conscience."

Without noticing the reply, he continued:

"And if the wood be secured, that it may not become a thoroughfare for vagrants, is not the property my own? and being mine, may I not use it as I please? A warrant!"

*Lieutenant.*—"Will you listen to what I may have to say to you?"

*Grassingly.*—"Leave my house!"

*Lieutenant.*—"As you desire it, I shall do so—but we shall shortly meet again."

The Lieutenant and Belmont now rose to depart. Grassingly made an effort to rise

rise also, but his strength failed him.—"Stay!" he at length exclaimed, "what would you—no—I will answer nothing—go, go, go."

*Belmont.*—"You had better bid us prolong our visit, or the cave in the wood may betray some secrets that may pain you to have known."

*Grassingly.*—"Leave my house!"

Roused by the latter words of Belmont, Grassingly, by a desperate effort of nature, recovered his feet, and, for some time, supported himself by the back of one of the rickety chairs, repeating his injunction for the others to leave the house, which they accordingly did; Grassingly, at the instant, throwing himself forward to the door, which he closed with a violence after them, that shook every part with which it was connected, shattering a few fragments from the frame by which it was supported.

Having mounted their horses, the two friends proceeded from the spot at a very slow

slow pace, being busied in conversation upon the suspicious and singular conduct of the individual they had just left. The Lieutenant had been serious in his threat of obtaining a warrant to have Grassingly apprehended, if such an instrument could be obtained; and which, all circumstances considered, he was of opinion could; and Belmont expressed sentiments in unison with his friend's.

They had walked their horses about half a mile, and had ascended from the valley, when a female, miserably clad, apparently about fifty years of age, with a small parcel under her arm, they observed about to descend the hill, in a direction for Grassingly's house. Curiosity to know whither she was going, so operated with both of them, that they instantly rode up to her, and the Lieutenant interrogated her to that effect.

"I am going home, your honour," was the poor woman's reply.

"And pray whereabouts, good woman,

man, is your home?" questioned Osrick.

"I live at the lone house in the valley, your honour," said she.

"And what is your name?" said Osrick.

"JUDITH,

your honour," said she, making an awkward curtsey as she spoke.

*Belmont.*—"Upon my life, I had already guessed as much."

*Lieutenant.*—"And you live with—"

*Judith.*—"Old Mr. Grassingly, your honour."

*Lieutenant.*—"How long have you lived with him?"

*Judith.*—"Two years, come Midsummer, your honour."

*Lieutenant.*—"I hope he is kind to you?"

*Judith.*—"He says he will be."

*Lieutenant.*—"And is he not now?"

*Judith.*

*Judith.*—"It doesn't so much signify now."

*Lieutenant.*—"And why does it not signify now?"

*Judith.*—"It can't signify so much now, your honour, as it will by-and-bye, because now I can still get victuals from the parish workhouse, from whence he was good enough to take me—which your honour knows isn't what every body would have done."

*Lieutenant.*—"Are you the servant of old Mr. Grassingly?"

*Judith.*—"Yes, your honour."

*Lieutenant.*—"And does not he furnish you with the provisions you need?"

*Judith.*—"Doesn't he do what, your honour?"

*Lieutenant.*—"Find victuals for you?"

*Judith.*—"Yes——no—sometimes he does."

*Lieutenant.*—"Not always?"

*Judith.*—"I mustn't tell."

*Lieutenant.*

*Lieutenant.*—"What wages does he give you?"

*Judith.*—"I have no wages."

*Lieutenant.*—"No wages! Why I understood you that he had hired you as his servant?"

*Judith.*—"So he has, your honour; but then he pays me no wages—but he says if I can but make a shift to live till he dies, he'll leave me enough to keep me out of the workhouse for ever."

*Belmont.*—"Pray what have you in that parcel under your arm?"

*Judith.*—"What, in this *here*, your honour?"

*Belmont.*—"Yes, in that."

*Judith.*—"Bread and meat, your honour—I have just been to the workhouse for it; they are *main* kind to me there, and allow me to call twice a-week, and sometimes I make bold to go oftener; and though they scold a little now and then, yet they never let me go away, Heaven bless 'em, empty-handed."

*Belmont.*

*Belmont.*—"Does your master ever partake of what you get there?"

*Judith.*—"Always; it is as much for him as myself, though they don't know it, that—I forgot, your honour, that I wasn't to tell—I am sure my master wouldn't be good to me by-and-bye, if he were once to know that I had blabbed."

*Belmont.*—"Believe me, he shall never be the wiser for any thing you may say to us."

*Judith.*—"I hope not, your honour, for you know it would be a grievous thing to go back again to a workhouse in one's old age."

*Lieutenant.*—"How came you in the workhouse, in the first place?"

"JUDITH'S STORY,

is but short, your honours," said she—"My father and mother were honest hard-working people—but they died many years ago, and left me and my brother to shift

shift for ourselves. Poor souls, they couldn't help it—they had nothing to leave, or we should have had it. Brother went to sea, and was drowned; and I went to service, being nearly twenty years of age, your honours. In my place I lived two-and-twenty years, and wanted for nothing; but I left it, at last, to get married. I had saved together thirty good pounds in my place, and had as nice a stock of clothes as a body could wish for. My husband was a shoemaker, and we did pretty well together, until poor William was balloted to serve in the militia, when not having the means to pay a man to go for him, he was obliged to go himself. From that time things went on but badly. I followed him from town to town, and from place to place, until I was nearly worn out, because I loved him, your honours; but poor William wore out first—he sickened with a fever, after he had been a soldier two years, and died."

A tear started in Judith's eye—it did honour to her feelings—it was a genuine tribute of affection due to the memory of a beloved friend.

Resuming her narrative, she thus continued:

"Poor William being laid in the cold grave, I too was seized with a fever, and lost the use of my limbs. I now became a burthen upon a strange parish; from which, as I got better, I was passed to my own. For two years after this, I could not walk without crutches—but God Almighty took care of me, gave me my health again at last, and enabled me to accept of the offer of old Mr. Grassingly, who, I hope, by-and-by, will take care of me also."

*Lieutenant.*—"I hope he will—but I would not have you expect much from him, lest you should be disappointed."

*Judith.*—"I don't expect much, your honour; a little will do for me, for I am yet able and willing to work."

*Belmont.*

*Belmont.*—" Pray does your master keep any servant besides yourself?"

*Judith.*—" None, your honour—that is, not in the house—"

*Belmont.*—" But out of it?"

*Judith.*—" I don't know any thing about that."

*Belmont.*—" Does any person visit him?"

*Judith.*—" Yes—no—I don't know."

*Belmont.*—" Then nobody resides in the house but him and you?"

*Judith.*—" I don't know."

*Belmont.*—" Not know!"

*Judith.*—" There is one room I am never suffered to go into—nobody goes into it but himself—and no longer ago than last night, I am sure I heard—"

*Belmont.*—" What?"

*Judith.*—" No—nothing, your honour."

*Belmont.*—" We have detained you a long time, Judith, and should offer you some recompence." Belmont took a few

shillings from his pocket, and presented them to Judith, who rather hesitated to receive them.

*Lieutenant.*—"Take them, Judith; they will not harm you, though the motive of the giver should not be a charitable one."

Judith held out her hand, received the offering, and curtseyed her thanks.

*Belmont.*—"In return, now, a few particulars that I shall state to you, respecting your master, of course you will answer?"

*Lieutenant.*—"As I suspected. O Belmont! your charity, if such it may be termed, proceeds from a corrupt source. But ere Judith answers any questions that you may put to her, I shall give her a few words of

*ADVICE.*

"Judith, consider your master as your friend, and betray not his secrets. He reposes

reposes a confidence in you, of which you should endeavour to prove yourself deserving, by acting upright to him on all occasions. If his conduct be unjust, you should quit his service—for to serve a villain, is to incur a stigma of disgrace yourself. The master is not accountable to the servant for his actions; neither has he a right to corrupt the principles of those that serve him. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," consequently, the advantages arising between the employer and the employed are reciprocal, and neither should abet the misdeeds of the other. But nothing is so strongly indicative of a wicked and depraved mind, as for individuals to slander the fame of those on whom they are considered as dependent. If good cannot be reported of a master, a good servant will be silent—excepting in criminal cases, when, in despite of the relative situation of master and servant, the latter will make the proper communications to the officers of

justice, that the ends of justice may be forwarded, and the guilty exposed and punished. I have been induced, Judith, to make these observations, to put you on your guard against the tendency of the future questions of my friend, lest you should, in the end, be induced to betray secrets, which justice may pronounce to be your duty to keep to yourself."

Judith, with evident confusion in her manner, replied—

"Indeed, your honour, I wouldn't betray my master's secrets, or speak ill of him, for the world—I hope I have said nothing that could offend even him or you. My master, I am afraid, will think my stay from home a tedious one; I therefore thank your honours for your kindness, and will depart."

Judith, in an instant, turned herself about, and directed her course, at a brisk pace, down the hill, towards the house, neither Osrick nor Belmont endeavouring to detain her. The latter, in fact, did not

not appear quite satisfied with the conduct of the Lieutenant, as his advice to Judith, he conceived, might well have been spared.

"Now

WHICH WAS RIGHT,

Lieutenant," said he, "you in sealing the lips of Judith, and driving her from us, or me in endeavouring to induce her to betray such secrets as might completely have given us the *whip hand* of her miserly employer?"

*Lieutenant.*—"What would *you* say to a servant of your's, Belmont, that had been induced to betray family secrets, which, beyond the family, would more vex than please you to have known?"

*Belmont.*—"I would discharge him."

*Lieutenant.*—"And how would you conduct yourself towards that person who had offered a successful bribe to your

servant, to induce him to betray that confidence you had reposed in him?"

*Belmont.*—"I never make a confidant of a servant."

*Lieutenant.*—"Not immediately, probably; yet his local situation may often give him a knowledge of occurrences, such as would be base behaviour in him at any time to disclose—as for instance, an application from a creditor, at a time when you had no cash in the house; and an hundred things of a similar nature, which the most correct man cannot always avoid. What, therefore, would you say to an individual who could so induce a servant to act unworthily by you?"

*Belmont.*—"I would tell him he was a scoundrel, and treat him accordingly. If he were my equal, I would risk my life to have a fair chance of blowing out his brains."

*Lieutenant.*—"What treatment should we have merited from old Grassingly, had

we

we given him an opportunity of justly accusing us of having so endeavoured to corrupt a servant of his?"

*Belmont.*—"It is not a case in point—your life has been attempted in his grounds—"

*Lieutenant.*—"But we have no proof that he was accessary to the affair; and even if we had, it does not follow that we should endeavour to corrupt the honesty of a servant."

*Belmont.*—"What! not to bring a villain to justice?"

*Lieutenant.*—"Certainly not. There are legal means to be pursued in such cases; a servant may be compelled to give evidence upon oath against his master—the law, you will find, has made ample provision to prevent the guilty from escaping, without our adopting measures that are totally unconnected with it, and such too as may chance to cause the finger of censure to be pointed at ourselves."

*Belmont.*—" You are too nice! For my part, I conceive, allowing you had the best of the present argument, that in labouring to do good, we are justifiable in doing a little wrong, in aid of our design."

*Lieutenant.*—" The wrong, at all times, certainly were better avoided. Heaven knows, our unintentional errors are quite numerous enough, without our swelling the catalogue with others of a more premeditated aspect—he who would not behold a man of many faults, should never look into a glass."

*Belmont.*—" Well, well, a truce to this discourse. I know you will have your way.—What is to be done now?"

*Lieutenant.*—" We will return to the Lodge."

*Belmont.*—" As wise as when we left it, thanks to your excellent notions of right and wrong."

It was not long ere they reached the Lodge. Mr. Mrs. and Miss Stokes, and Alethea,

Alethea, they found in the drawing-room, with Mrs. Somerton. Mr. Somerton was absent. Mrs. Somerton enquired of the Lieutenant if he had seen his father, observing that he had been from home the whole of the morning. Mr. Somerton, at the instant, entered the room.

"Enquiries were just making for you, Sir," said Osrick, "as



would have been far from complete without you."

"It appears, however, Osrick," said Mr. Somerton, "that I have arrived in time to take up a knife and fork with you, as usual. In my walk I met the post-boy, and took of him a letter for you.

Mr. Somerton gave Osrick the letter, and then turned towards Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, Miss Stokes, and Alethea, and

expressed himself much obliged to them for their visit. Osrick was busied, in perusing the letter; and Belmont had taken a seat next to Mrs. Somerton.

"Your walk," said Mrs. Somerton, looking at her husband, "I hope, my dear, has been a pleasant one?"

"The weather," he replied, "was favourable."

"And your spirits, I hope," said Mrs. Somerton, "were sufficiently buoyant to enjoy it?"

Mr. Somerton made no reply, but addressed a few words to Alethea.

"I did not expect," observed Belmont, "to have the pleasure of seeing so many good friends at the Lodge, after my ride, or I should certainly have used my endeavours to have persuaded the Lieutenant to return earlier."

"Had you been here ten minutes sooner than you were," said Mrs. Somerton, "you might have had a *tête-à-tête*

with me, for our friends had not arrived more than five minutes before you and the Lieutenant came in, who, in all probability, would have taken a short walk to have met his father."

"You are determined to punish me, I perceive, for being so long on horseback, by telling me how much more agreeably my time might have been passed elsewhere. Some men, in truth, are born to be unfortunate, and, I much fear, it is my destiny to be one of the number."

Mr. Somerton frowned. He continued a desultory conversation, however, with Alethea and Miss Stokes, though his attention was too occupied with the others to lose a syllable they uttered.

"You will stay dinner, however," said Mrs. Somerton, "now you are here; your presence, you know, is acceptable at all times."

"Why I do so feel myself at home," answered Mr. Belmont, "when I am at the Lodge, that I never consider an invitation

vitation necessary in partaking of its hospitalities."

Mr. Somerton experienced a sensation at this moment, such as those who have never felt the dire effects of the horrid mental distemper, jealousy, can have no conception of. He still, however, contrived to continue a conversation with Constance Stokes, and Alethea.

"What does that letter contain," at length asked Miss Stokes of the Lieutenant, "that you are poring over it so long? Does not the lady write an intelligible hand? or are the words so grateful to your sight, that you would not willingly take your eyes from them?"

"It is not from a lady," said the Lieutenant.

"Well, well," said Alethea, "no matter who it is from; but if you have any news, pray communicate it."

"After dinner," said Osrick, "I will," a servant, the moment before, having announced dinner on table.

Dinner

Dinner over, Miss Stokes reminded him of his promise.

"Now Lieutenant," she observed, "you will keep your word, and let us into the secret of what

*THE LETTER*

you have received contains."

"Certainly," replied the Lieutenant; "and I am sorry to tell you that I must quit this part of the world to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the whole party, almost at the same instant.

"To-morrow!" repeated Mr. Somerton.

"Even so," said the Lieutenant.—"There is the letter. The regiment, it is supposed, will be ordered immediately for foreign service, and I am summoned to my post."

"And will you go?" enquired Miss Stokes.

"Certainly," replied the Lieutenant. "I am

"I am at my country's disposal, and shall never, voluntarily, swerve from my duty."

Alethea sighed; and her bright eyes were already moistened with tears.

"It is so indeed," said Mr. Somerton, refolding the epistolary mandate, and returning it to his son. "I did not expect, Osrick, so soon to lose you; and in our

*REGRETS,*

I perceive" (alluding to the company) "we are mutual. Much, my dear boy, as I could wish you to remain with us for a few weeks longer, I would not purchase that pleasure at so severe a price as your dereliction of duty."

Much more was said on the subject. Miss Stokes volubly declared the sorrow she felt, or pretended to feel, on the occasion; while Alethea pensively listened to the conversation, and said nothing—

but

but her lovely expressive features spoke much more than her tongue would willingly have acknowledged, had she been questioned on the subject.

Belmont was struck with her altered manner; for the first time he suspected that the Lieutenant had obtained an interest in her heart, which might operate to prevent the designs he had in view there himself, from being attended with the full success he wished. Osrick, however, he perceived, and with some pleasure, did not, or would not, appear to notice the change in Alethea—with pleasure, because he conceived it evinced to him, that however the heart of Alethea might feel interested for the fate of the Lieutenant, his, in the present instance, felt only for her's, as in common for his other friends. The Lieutenant absent, therefore, thought he, and a few weeks well directed perseverance, may yet make her mine, and in my own way, *sans* the trammels of matrimony.

The

The letter had had a very unfavourable effect upon the spirits of the party—the Lieutenant, in fact, was dear to the whole of them, and the unexpected manner in which he had been ordered to leave them, might well call forth their regrets, though no one attempted to dispute the propriety of the measure.

"It is rather unfortunate too," remarked Belmont, "that you should be compelled to join your regiment, Lieutenant, just at this time—Grassingly may now triumph, for I do not see how we are to proceed with him in your absence."

This observation naturally occasioned a

*RETROSPECTION*

of occurrences—the whole of what had happened that day with him and the Lieutenant, was related; and which, after much discourse on the subject, they agreed with Mr. Somerton, had better

stand

stand over for farther investigation, until the Lieutenant once more obtained leave of absence again to sojourn at the Lodge.

"What with one thing and another, Osrick," said Mr. Somerton, "your adventures within the last few weeks have been singular enough—but the ghost, of all others, was certainly the most surprising, though your adventures in the wood proved the most dangerous."

"True," replied the Lieutenant; "but I hope the time is not far distant, when those mysterious particulars, on which my thoughts often dwell, will be explained to me, that I may better comprehend the nature of them, and satisfy the curiosity of my friends—though in what manner such a *desideratum* is to be brought about, Heaven only knows."

The afternoon had wore away, and the sable tinge of twilight had announced the sun to have sunk beneath the western horizon, when Belmont withdrew—observing,

serving, however, that he should return to spend part of the evening with the party, as it was the last he should have an opportunity of passing with the Lieutenant, in all probability, for some time.

Belmont had been gone but a short time, when Mrs. Somerton withdrew also; for as Osrick intended to depart early in the morning, there were some trifling matters for her to attend to, in giving orders to the servants, and that his trunks, &c. might be ready in due time.

Mr. Somerton, losing his jealous fears for the moment, in the regrets which Osrick's approaching departure had excited, joined in conversation with the remainder of the party; the dangers of war being the theme with the female part of it, and the glory of wearing the laurels which only could be gathered therefrom, being the occasional replications of the others.

Alethea appeared to be much more pained than pleased with the topic—a sigh now

now and then escaped her—her bosom heaved with secret sorrow—and so increasing were her emotions, at last, that, apprehensive of their being noticed, she removed to the window, gently drew the curtain aside, and descanted on the heavenly beauties of the night.

The drawing-room overlooked a pleasure-garden and shrubbery of considerable extent; and to which the stillness of the night, the radiance of the twinkling stars, and the glistening moon, gave an unusually interesting appearance.

Alethea continued her position for some time—the scene was pleasing, and not ill-adapted to the temper of her mind—it rather soothed than inspired melancholy.

At length her attention was arrested, by the appearance of a figure gliding slowly through some distant interstices in

*THE SHRUBBERY,*

and occasioned an immediate enquiry of Mr. Somerton, of who the person was that thus indulged in a solitary wandering in the garden after sunset?

"In the garden!" said Mr. Somerton; "the gardener has been gone some time," he continued, as he rose from his chair, and walked to the window; "and I know of no one that should be walking there at present. In what part, Miss Castleby, did you observe any one?"

"Just to the left of the poplar walk," she replied, "in the thickest part of the shrubbery."

"Can you perceive any person there, at present?" said he.

"Not at present," replied Alethea, "but I did, not a minute since.—There," she continued, "do you observe anybody now, Sir?"

"Plainly,"

"Plainly," observed Mr. Somerton—"Who can he be? He appears to be making for the outer gate, but that he will find locked—of course, he must be compelled to return this way."

The garden was surrounded by a very high wall, and had no entrances to it, but by a gate nearly adjoining the house, and another at its opposite extremity; both of which, when the gardener was not on the grounds, were generally kept locked, the keys being invariably hung, for the use of such of the family as were permitted to walk there, which included none of the domestics, the gardener excepted, on a brass hook in the hall.

"I have lost sight of him again now," said Alethea. "I should like to know, whoever he be, what it is he is doing there."

"I feel a similar curiosity," remarked Mr. Somerton, "myself."

"Suppose, Sir, I go and ascertain?" said Osrick.

"No,"

"No," replied his father; "I have no objection to the walk, and will go myself."

"If Belmont had not left us," observed Alethea, "to go elsewhere, I should have imagined it was him, for from what I could discover by this light, and at such a distance, it was certainly like his figure."

"Belmont!" said Osrick, "what should he do in the shrubbery at this hour?"

"What indeed!" rejoined Mr. Somerton, as he hastily quitted the room.

Mr. Somerton, prior to Alethea's remark, had conceived that the object he saw at a distance, in stature and gait resembled Belmont—and the circumstance of Mrs. Somerton having left the room soon after Belmont, and had not since returned, recurred to him at the same moment, and revived those jealous fears, which Osrick's approaching departure had, for the time, suspended. His suspicion

picion of its being Belmont in the shrubbery, being, as it were, partly confirmed by Alethea, he hastily descended to the hall, not in the most enviable state of mind, for the key of the inner-gate, if possible, fully to ascertain if his suspicion was indeed correct.

Neither of the keys were hanging in the usual place! He pulled the bell. A servant soon appeared.

"Where are the garden keys?" petulantly enquired Mr. Somerton.

*Servant.*—"Are they not on the hook, Sir?"

*Mr. Somerton.*—"If they were, puppy, I need not enquire for them of you."

*Servant.*—"Then I know not where they are, Sir—perhaps they are left in the locks."

Mr. Somerton was presently at the inner-gate; but it was locked.

Not satisfied with this, keeping close to the wall, he walked round to the outer gate, and found that locked also.

Once more returning to the hall, he was about to pull the bell for the servant, to enquire farther for

THE KEYS,

when a natural impulse induced him to look towards the hook on which they usually hung; when, to his great surprise, he perceived that they were both there!

He now pulled the bell with some violence, and the former servant appeared.

"How came those keys in their place?" enquired Mr. Somerton, "Booby, why do you hesitate to give me an answer? —Who hung them there?"

*Servant.*—"Indeed I don't know, Sir."

*Mr. Somerton.*—"Who was in the hall, after I left it just now?"

*Servant.*—"I have seen nobody, Sir, but—"

*Mr. Somerton.*—"Who, blockhead?"

*Servant.*—"My mistress, Sir."

*Mr.*

*Mr. Somerton.*—"Who?"

*Servant.*—"Mrs. Somerton, Sir."

*Mr. Somerton.*—"Where is your mistress now?"

*Servant.*—"She has returned to the company in the drawing-room, Sir."

*Mr. Somerton.*—"Tell her I would speak to her immediately."

The servant disappeared; and Mrs. Somerton, soon after, entered the hall.

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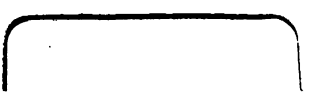
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